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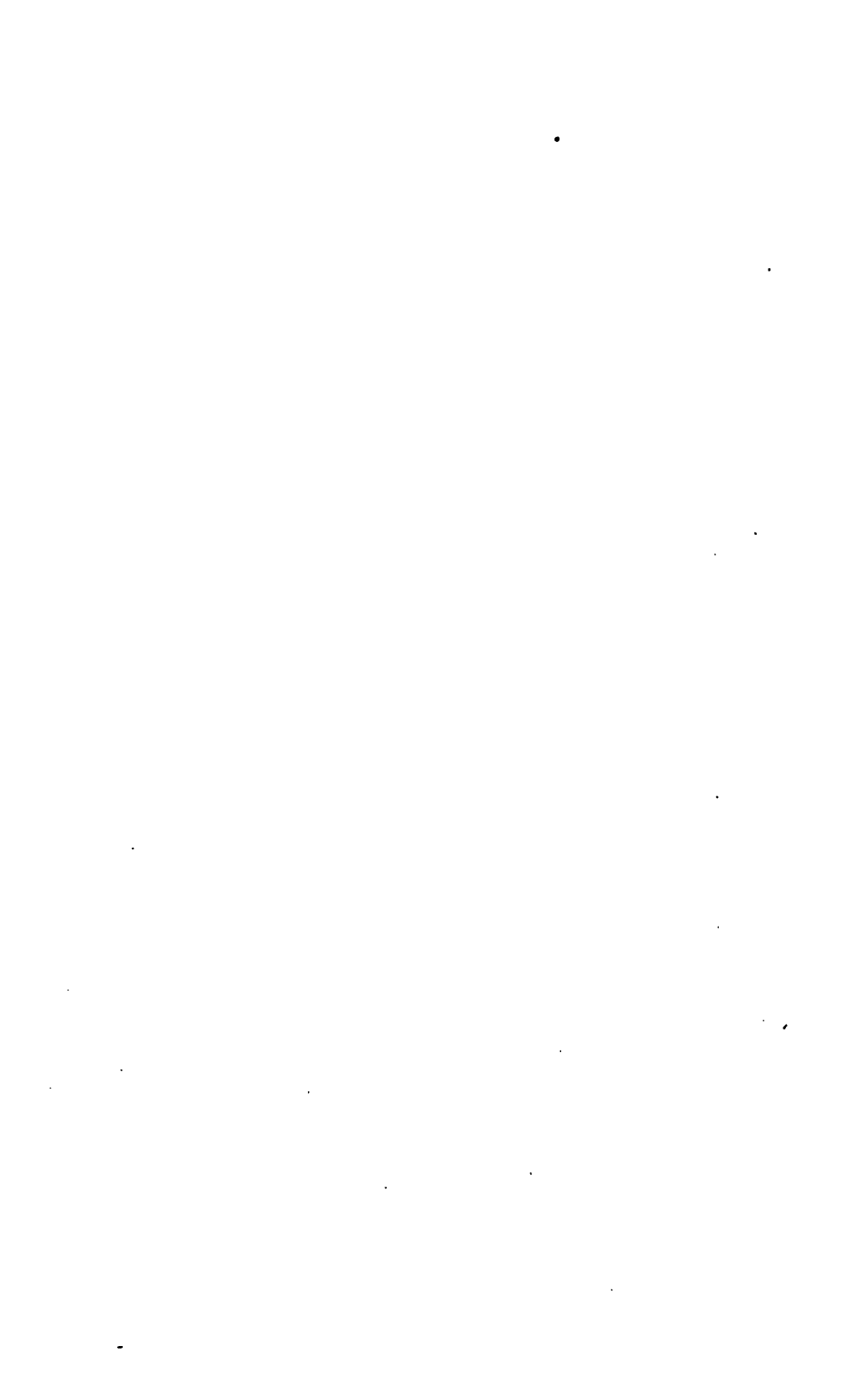


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**A Tour  
Through the Eastern Counties**

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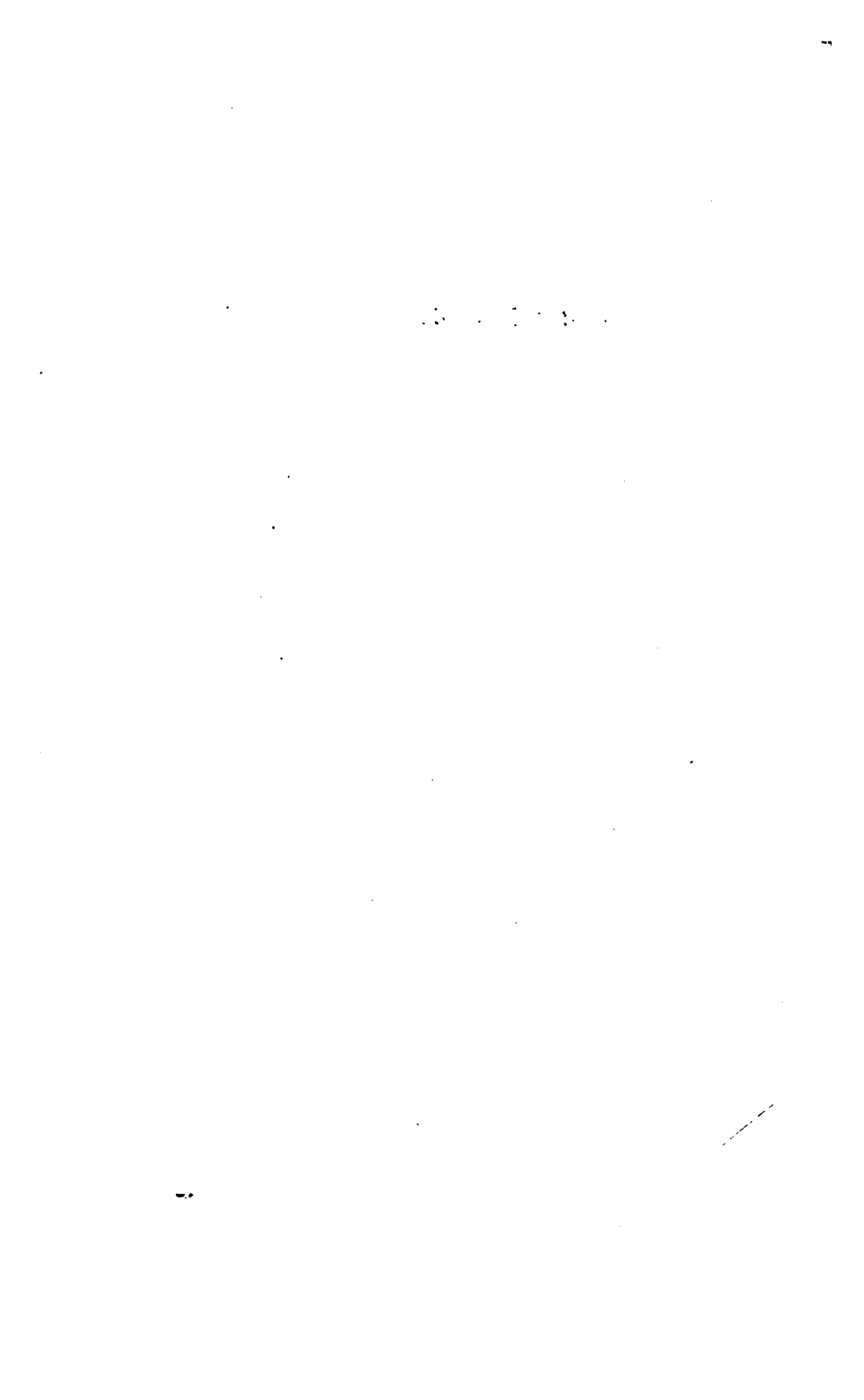
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CROXTON HEATH

[See page 276]







# A TOUR IN A PHAETON

Through the Eastern Counties

BY

JAMES JOHN HUSSEY

AUTHOR OF 'AN OLD-FASHIONED JOURNEY' 'A DRIVE THROUGH ENGLAND'  
'ON THE BOX SEAT' 'A HOLIDAY ON THE ROAD' ETC.



WITH SIXTEEN FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR AND A MAP

LONDON

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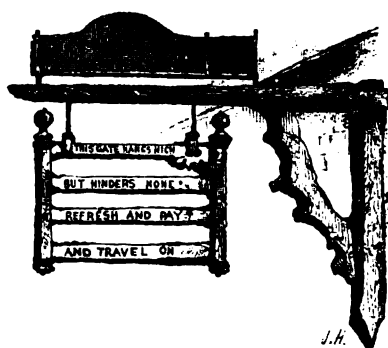


TO  
MY MOTHER  
AND TO THE FONDLY CHERISHED MEMORY OF  
MY LOVING WIFE



' Though lost to sight, to memory dear  
Thou ever wilt remain :  
This only hope my heart can cheer—  
The hope to meet again '

Deedee



*Sign of the Falgate Inn.*  
(See page 203.)

## P R E F A C E.

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THE TITLE of this volume so clearly expresses its purport, that, save for custom's sake, a preface is scarcely needful. The following pages contain the simple record of a delightful summer outing, a 'cruise on wheels' through the three counties of Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk. The scenic and other attractions of this eastern portion of England are, I think, too little known. True, I cannot promise those who follow us in our pleasant journey either mountains or waterfalls, but all things else that go to make up the beauty of the land I can; ruined abbeys and ancient churches fraught with interest for the ecclesiologist and antiquary; romantic homes of the olden days—many of these moated still—all abounding in past memories and historic associations; old-time coaching hostelries wherein our portwine-loving forefathers made merry; old-fashioned oddly built country towns; picturesque hamlets; pleasant pastoral scenes varied by wild wind-swept heaths and gorse-sprinkled commons; and, if I can—

not show my readers lakes, I can introduce them to the Land of the Broads, the quiet beauties of which artists seem only recently to have discovered.

The roads we found to be on the whole excellent; better indeed than we have found them elsewhere in England (the extent of ground covered being considered); moreover—an important moreover for the comfort of the driving tourist—the inns on the way are good, above the average of country inns.

With so much to interest and delight us, little wonder that we most thoroughly enjoyed our expedition, and that we returned home with a very pleasant impression of the scenic and other attractions of this neglected corner of England.

Of the illustrations I have only to remark that I trust they will lend an added interest to the account of our wanderings out of the beaten tourist track. I have to express my thanks to Mr. Pearson for the care he has taken in reproducing them.

J. J. H.

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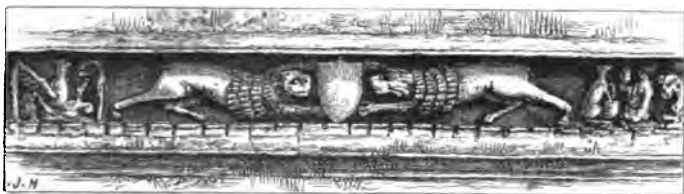
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*Ancient Hour-glass Holder, Ingworth Church.*  
(See p. 228.)



*Carving on Old House at Halesworth.*

# A TOUR IN A PHAETON.

## CHAPTER I.

The Pleasures and Advantages of Driving Tours—An Ideal Holiday—Untraveller England—Speed, the Curse of our Century—Rural Inns—The Country as seen from the Road and the Rail—‘The Highlands of Essex’—A little-visited Land—A Country of Old-time Buildings and Historic Spots—Our Programme—Highways and Byways—The Langdon Hills—How Guide-books are sometimes compiled—A Grand Prospect—The Opinion of an Experienced Traveller.

OF all the various ways of spending a summer holiday, of all the many modes of travel, where pleasure, not speed, is the chief consideration, commend to me a driving tour, with all its charming independence and the exceptional opportunities it affords of leisurely seeing and thoroughly comprehending the rare charms of our beautiful English scenery—scenery of its kind unequalled in the world.

The fortunate traveller by road, how enviable is his lot! He is delivered from the bondage of time-tables, the pleasure of his outing is never marred

by weary waiting at dismal junctions, or hurried rushing to catch certain trains—or miss them, as the case may be. Haste and bustle form no part or parcel of his programme : his is rather a quiet, restful progress ; being master of his own time, he can rise and breakfast when he likes, can start on his day's journey just when he chooses ; he knows nothing of the worry of luggage, for his belongings always go with him, he leaves his hotel door in his own carriage and arrives at his night's destination in like manner. Having full control over his conveyance, he can stop at any spot by the way that may take his fancy, he can loiter or make haste, just as his inclination at the time may dictate—in fine, he travels in the truest sense of the word, he is not simply conveyed from place to place, as is a passenger by railway. An ideal way of spending a summer holiday this surely ? Storing one's mind with a gallery of lovely landscapes and beauty-spots, never to be forgotten ; acquiring at the same time an intimate knowledge of the rare charms of rural England ; gathering pleasant experiences each day, and gaining health and strength besides. What a happy combination of good things !

One of the most attractive features of such a journey is its perfect freedom. The driving tourist, if he be wise, will be careful not to bind himself by any precise or pre-arranged plans, but will hold himself untrammelled to wander whither he will ; thus may he explore by-country lanes leading to out-of-the-way unfrequented spots, and perchance discover for himself many an odd nook and corner undreamed



of by the guide-book compiler, and never visited by the genus 'tripper.' All the more delightful these for being unknown and unfamed, for is there not a kind of fascination about a quaint or a picturesque spot that we discover for ourselves? and, moreover, does not such a spot, come upon un-awares, charm us the more by its very freshness? No small matter this, in these days of personally conducted tours, when scenery is catalogued auction fashion, and all things described, even as to the best point of view, so that the ordinary tourist, armed with his faithful handbook, is fully posted up in, and duly prepared for, all he has to see, and often by anticipating too much he experiences disappointment, instead of having a pleasant surprise. Indeed, one of the special charms of road travel is the constant coming upon the unknown, the delightful state of expectancy in which the mind is ever kept, the continual wondering what new beauty the next bend in the way will reveal. Not the least of the pleasures of a driving tour are the unexpected ones.

Though so thoroughly enjoyable, I do not consider that our form of outing is by any means an expensive one. The fortunate possessors of horses must keep them somewhere, and they do not cost so very much more on the road than 'eating their heads off' doing nothing in their stables at home, whilst perchance their owners are absent at some fashionable watering-place, repeating their life in London second-hand by the sea, or it may be rushing about restlessly here and there, as fast as railway and steamer will carry them, spending much, travel-

ling far and seeing little. 'La rapidité, voilà le rêve de notre siècle,' says Théophile Gautier. 'We cannot travel fast enough, we must get quickly through the country—comprehend nothing, admire nothing, only arrive quickly.' Or as our own countryman, Matthew Arnold, has it :

We see all sights from pole to pole,  
And glance and nod, and bustle by,  
And never once possess our soul  
Before we die.

Even if, to take such a charming holiday as the one we took, it be necessary to hire a horse and conveyance, it must be remembered that the cost of hiring would include all travelling expenses ; one gets, too, such a continuous enjoyment from an outing of this kind, such a constant change of scene is brought before one, the mind is always so pleasantly occupied with the many varying and interesting experiences, that ennui is a thing impossible ; then the exhilarating effect of being out so long in the fresh bracing country air is a pleasure in itself and as health-giving as delightful, and, having so much to see and do, there is no further expenditure needful for amusement or for fashionable dress. Still again, the charges at the country inns, where the tourist proper is unknown, are, as a rule, most reasonable ; indeed oftentimes so well have we fared, such willing attention have we received, so moderate has been our bill, that I have even frequently felt a compunction in paying so little for so much. I presume that the rent, rates, and taxes of these rural inns are trifling compared with what the landlords of the grander

though less comfortable hotels of fashionable watering-places have to pay, who have besides only a limited season in which to make their profit ; this may account for the difference in the charges ; probably also ' mine host ' in the country places does his marketing to better advantage.

It was in the pleasant month of June that we took the journey herein related ; a month, speaking generally, of blue skies, of fleecy summer clouds and softened sunshine, for then there is no disagreeable glare of light, nor is the heat too great for outdoor enjoyment. A time it is when the country is at its fairest and freshest, a time when the trees are looking their leafiest, the grass its greenest ; wild flowers then, too, everywhere abound, brightening the land with their glowing colours and making gay the hedgerows with their many tints ; nor is the eye alone delighted, for the sweet breath of the summer air is laden with countless perfumes—it may be that the scent of new-mown hay is borne upon the breeze, or of a bean-field, or of lime trees, or of the hawthorn in blossom ; then the delicate odour of the honeysuckle and the rose is as frequent as it is welcome ; or again perchance it is the resinous fragrance of pine trees, or the more powerful perfume of clover or of the gorse that greets the wanderer. In June, too, the birds seem to sing their sweetest and gladdest songs, and, no slight consideration for the holiday-maker, the days are delightfully long.

Why, just when the country is in the prime of its purity and beauty, a veritable Arcadia, bursting into bud and blossom—why it is that just then every

one should elect to remain in town and leave all this wonderful loveliness, these glorious fresh and spreading landscapes, these leafy woods, rippling streams, flower-strewn meadows, unseen, uncared for, passes my comprehension. Who would gaze upon crowds, dusty streets, and smoke-stained houses, when he could refresh his eyes with the soft verdure of the fields and the luxuriant foliage of the young summer full of grace and tender beauty? Certainly not I. And here let me remark that he who has never travelled through rural England by road or footpath in the green and sunny month of June, knows little of the supreme loveliness of his own land.

Having decided to take our holiday, and having determined, as on previous occasions, that a driving tour through some portion of Great Britain would be the most enjoyable manner of spending it, the only further matter necessary to be considered was, what portion it should be. A map was consulted, and after some discussion we selected the three counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, as the scene of our perambulations.

Unless I am greatly mistaken, the majority of Englishmen are under the impression that this corner of their land is wholly flat and mostly uninteresting. How it may appear from the railway I cannot say, never having so traversed it, but driving along the old high roads and rural lanes we found the scenery to be exceedingly beautiful, the country pleasantly undulating, hilly even in places; indeed, during portions of our journey the brake was not only needful, but in constant requisition—so much for preconceived

ideas. The reality was certainly different from our expectations. Considering that Essex has been termed the flattest of English counties, we were agreeably surprised by its diversity of surface; though level and doubtless monotonously uninteresting in parts, it is not fair to judge of the whole by a portion. The tourist whose knowledge of this county is confined to a rush by rail through it, or what may be seen from on board a Thames steamer, would assuredly change his notions if he followed on our track. Our first day's stage, I may here remark, took us to the Langdon Hills, the 'Highlands of Essex' (of which more anon), and we left that county by a steep hill on the top of which was a prominent notice board with the following warning 'To bicyclists.—This hill is DANGEROUS.'

The scenery of the eastern counties is strangely neglected, possibly because it has been so much and unjustly maligned; at any rate, it is out of fashion for the time, with the exception of the Broad district and the fringe of tripper-haunted watering-places round the coast (if these can be fairly classed as scenery). The regular tourist is therefore a stranger in the land, for he only goes where his guide-books direct him, and these are wonderfully slow to discover 'fresh woods and pastures new,' and perhaps it is a very good thing that it should be so. On no previous journey have we come upon more charming wayside pictures and pastoral peeps than on the present one, our sketch-book has never been in more frequent requisition, and as Lord Beaconsfield justly remarks 'pastoral scenery never palls. The eye may become

weary of mountains and the more stupendous effects of nature ; but meadow and woodland never lose their charm.' I think that perhaps we were the more delighted by the picturesque 'bits' we came ever and again upon, because we were hardly prepared for so much sylvan beauty in a land generally presumed to be devoid of scenic attractions. Nor must the human aspect of the landscape be forgotten, for man has studded it with the works of his hands. You cannot travel far in Eastern England without coming upon some historic spot ; some ancient building suggestive of old romance around whose walls bygone memories linger, fraught with interest for the antiquary as well as delightful to the eye of the artist. The country abounds in human associations, in relics of the picturesque and never-returning past, with all the added charm they give to even the most beautiful scenery. Taking full advantage of our free and independent mode of travel, the only thing definite that we decided upon before starting was to drive to Yarmouth on the east coast, thence northward on to Cromer through the district of the Broads, returning home somehow through the centre of the three counties, the exact route to be decided upon each day as we proceeded.

The weather was kindly disposed ; we were favoured with a fine sunshiny morning on which to commence our wanderings, so we started in the best of spirits, for was not our holiday all unspent before us ? and what pleasing previsions we indulged in as we drove along, of the many good things that we knew were in store for us !

How delightful is the first day in the country to those just escaped from the din of dusty streets, from the smoky and unbeautiful surroundings of our overgrown cities! Doubly enchanting the country seemed to us after our long entanglement amongst the mean and straggling outskirts of Eastern London. What a relief it was to exchange the noise of the thronged thoroughfares for the quiet peacefulness of the rural roads, where green hedges and shady trees take the place of houses, and pleasant footpaths that of pavements, and where cabs, 'buses, and tramways are unknown! How light and pure the air seemed after the close smoke-laden atmosphere of town! Well do I remember the little thrill of pleasure that went through us when, after reaching the real country, we came upon the first genuine old-fashioned farmstead with its high-pitched gables, its great red-tiled roof, bent with age, and splashed as with gold and silver where the lichens had made their home. An ancient homestead it was, with great elms behind and quite a colony of out-buildings scattered around, a grand bit of building though only a farmhouse.

I verily believe that our hearts beat just a trifle faster when, as we journeyed on, we came upon an old wooden windmill, weather-stained and time-toned, repaired here and there in a happy makeshift manner, old, strained and battered, still bravely working on, its sails slowly revolving round and round, and to complete the picture the white-headed miller himself, looking out at us from an odd slit of a window in the side of his rickety but picturesque structure.

Then the first half-timbered cottage we came upon, how charming it seemed, with its tiny garden full of homely flowers, gay of colour and sweet of perfume, its leaden lattice windows (all religiously closed, by the way) and its plastered front, painted every imaginable hue by the sun and rain of forgotten years!

Perhaps, however, the greatest charm to the town-tired Londoner of his first day in the country is the sylvan quietude, so peace-bestowing and rest-giving, a quietude deepened rather than broken by the gladsome songs of birds, the distant lowing of cattle, the slumberous rustling of leaves stirred by the breeze, or the chime of some far-away church clock, softened and mellowed by distance. Then, as we progressed, our journey became in truth one never-ending picture: we drove on in a delicious day-dream, drinking in the sweetness and beauty of the sunny landscape, made fairer still by the happy homes of men, telling as they did of human occupancy.

How light-hearted we felt that day: how we rejoiced within ourselves that we had for a time escaped from the monotonous routine and conventionalities of town life! How we congratulated ourselves that we were not slaves to fashion, bound to remain in town just when the country was in the height of its summer glory!

To us, devoted lovers of the country as we are, what attractions could crowded London possibly offer in exchange for our free roving existence, our healthy out-of-door Bohemian sort of life, with the



mild excitement of exploring an unknown part of the world, even though such were a portion of our own country? I believe there are few who appreciate the charms of the country side more than your hard-worked Londoner just escaped from office or professional employment. He who lives all the year round in the midst of natural beauties seldom values his advantages. The effect on the mind of even the fairest scenes is wonderfully enhanced by contrast with less lovely surroundings.

As I have before stated, our first day's stage took us to the Langdon Hills, a spot seemingly much out of the world; so primitive the village of that name, so unsophisticated the people, we felt that both it and they might be leagues away in some untravelled corner of the distant shires—a spot that might be miles from anywhere. In fact, the whole place gave us a strange feeling of remoteness, a very real feeling, yet one hardly to be described in words or analysed. So did the slumberous calm, the old-world tranquillity of the place, impress us, we could scarcely realise that only that morning we had been in the midst of the hurry and bustle of the greatest city of this eager money-making century, so great was the contrast of the feverish activity and rush of modern London life with the dreamy and soothing atmosphere of the spot, so far removed did we seem 'from noise and smoke of town' and 'from the madding crowd's ignoble strife.'

Somehow—I have never yet been able to define to my satisfaction exactly how it is—but somehow, when travelling by road, upon arriving at any spot,

one feels so much further away from the rest of the world than when one has arrived at the selfsame place by the speedy railway. Possibly it may be that the gradual progress, the countless green fields, the miles of spreading country, the straggling villages, the many homes passed by, the numbers of things seen on the way, give to the driving tourist an impression of distance that no mere rapid transit by rail from one station to another can possibly afford. By road the distance between different towns and villages seems lengthened, in comparison with the same distance done by train, in a curious manner ; the country appears more spacious, the connecting link between places seems slighter, and the illusion of remoteness is enhanced thereby to a degree that no one who has not travelled the same country both by road and rail can realise or understand. The iron horse has annihilated distance for us, speed has in a measure overcome space ; nowadays we rush through the land snugly ensconced the while in a comfortably padded carriage, so that we simply arrive at our destination with little or no knowledge or care of what intervenes ; thus we lose all idea of remoteness and the vague charm it adds of apparent inaccessibility.

But, after this too long digression, to return to the Langdon Hills. As we mounted to the summit of these, we passed by the few straggling cottages that form the tiny hamlet that so impressed us with its primitive picturesqueness and old-time look. One of these lowly cottages that does duty as a Post Office we noticed with pleasure had a thatched roof,

a roof bronzed and tinted with age, green with mosses here and there ; the small window also was gay with scarlet geraniums and fuchsias, two flowers that appear to be the special favourites of cottagers, and that always seem to flourish with them. A cottage it was that suggested Devonshire to us, rather than the eastern counties ; possibly our imagination was heightened by the wooded hills beyond—hills that certainly did not give us the impression of ‘a county as flat as a pancake,’ as a popular writer has termed Essex, which only proves to me that some people glibly describe places that they have never taken the trouble to see. Indeed, a certain guide-book compiler whom I chanced to meet during my wanderings, taking his holiday at a watering-place, in an unguarded moment honestly confessed to me that he had visited scarcely one of the numerous places and picturesque spots that he professed to give an account of : ‘How could I see them ?’ he said ; ‘the sum I was paid for the copy, though fairly liberal as such work is paid for, would not have recouped me for my time and hotel expenses ; the thing could not be done. No, I collected all the works I could relating to the part of the country I was commissioned to write upon, and gathered my information from them, and one of your books was amongst the number.’

Reaching the top of the Langdon Hills we came upon a homely little hostel ; here we obtained a modest meal and a welcome rest ; but, though modest our repast, it was served nicely upon a scrupulously clean cloth, the ale was cool and clear, and the charge

for two of us gave change from half-a-crown, and, marvellous to say, the civil waitress (not charged for in the bill) did not loiter about—as is the usual wont of her kind—to be remembered, though she did not lose thereby. As we were about to leave we were asked if we would care to go to the top of the house to see the view from there, which the landlady told us was very fine; so we went. A lad showed us up, but he, too, as soon as he had pointed out the different landmarks, suddenly disappeared and we saw no more of him. What a happy land this, where backsheesh is a thing unknown, and simple attentions are willingly given without looking for reward!

The prospect from the highest point of the Langdon Hills is one worth going far to see. It is astonishing that a spot of so much beauty (possessing a peculiar character all its own, and not to be repeated in England) should be so near to town and so little known. For ourselves I must confess that it was quite by accident that we went to Langdon, and had it not been for our planless mode of wandering about country it never would have been seen by us. All of which goes to prove how much of interest, how many unknown spots await the traveller who explores the land in our rambling leisurely fashion, content merely to enjoy his outing and take his chance of the good things that are sure to come to him, careless of performing any definite itinerary.

From where we stood we looked down through the sun-filled air upon a glorious expanse of waving woods, green meadows, and red tilled fields, down upon miles of smiling verdure dotted here and there

with scattered farmsteads and red-roofed villages, with ever and again a peep of a distant church tower or spire : all this goodly prospect bounded only by the circling blue of the far-away horizon where land and sky were blended together in a dim dreamy uncertainty. Right through the heart of this map-like panorama wound the silvery Thames—at least it appeared silvery to us—we could trace the river's winding course from just below Purfleet in the west, to where it widened out and lost its identity in the long line of gleaming silver of the distant sea. A magnificent prospect, in truth, so space-expressing ; our vision rejoiced in its unaccustomed freedom, confined as it is for so great a portion of the year to the sadly limited vista of a London street. The stately river was dotted with ships outward and inward bound, from the mighty ocean steamer (so dwarfed by distance that it was difficult to realise that the tiny moving speck with the long trail of smoke behind was actually a little world afloat) to the humble barge : several of these picturesque craft were noticeable on the water, their many sails, light in sunshine and dark in shade, added greatly to the effect of the picture by the life they gave to it, and, as they glided downward with the tide, we watched them

. . . . pass on and on, and go  
From less to less, and vanish into light.

Yet, though now so little known, the view from the Langdon Hills has often been written about and described by travellers of the last century, who being unblest with railways, when journeying this way,

could not but observe what was before them. If they went with slower speed than we do, they saw more, they were not taken into darksome tunnels under hills, or through gloomy cuttings just where the scenery is most beautiful, as are their descendants in this advanced age. And if in the light of this our day we consider that they made haste slowly, what of it? Life was not the feverish thing it is now, an endless rushing hither and thither, a ceaseless competition and striving for wealth; men then had time to live as well as to die; and it could hardly be said of our forefathers, the Puritans excepted (and I doubt much if they were as severe as some would have us believe), that they 'took their pleasures sadly.'

In times past then, when travelling Englishmen knew more of their own country than they do now, the view from the Langdon Hills was often stated to be 'the finest in England.' That experienced traveller Arthur Young, in his 'Six Weeks' Tour in the Southern Counties,' thus writes of this spot: 'On the summit of a vast hill, one of the most astonishing prospects to be beheld breaks out almost at once from one of the dark lanes. Such a prodigious valley everywhere clothed with the finest verdure, and intersected with numberless hedges and woods, appears beneath you, that it is past description—the Thames winding through it full of ships; and bounded by the hills of Kent. Nothing can exceed it unless that which Hannibal exhibited to his disconsolate troops when he bade them behold the glories of the Italian plains. I beg

you will go and view this enchanting scene . . . . I never beheld anything equal to it, even in the West of England, that region of landscape.' Due allowance must, of course, be made for the grandiloquent and exaggerative language which our ancestors delighted to employ when describing scenery at all out of the common-place ; still it must be noted that this skilled traveller had seen much of other lands besides his own, and the true value of his remarks can therefore be estimated by the comparisons he makes.

This of English views is certainly unique in one respect : the prospect—which, by the way, comes suddenly upon the observer and gains greatly by the fact—is uninterrupted in all directions; and the Thames, widening to a mighty river here, gives a sense of vastness to the scene more suggestive of Western America, that land of big rivers, mighty distances, and broad effects, than a portion of our 'tight little island,' where, as a rule, simple grandeur gives place to perfected beauty, and wild spaciousness to gem-like loveliness. In truth, as we looked seaward down upon our famous English river, where it flows on in the full majesty of its breadth and power, we felt, without a great strain upon our imagination, that we could fancy ourselves gazing upon one of those illimitable prospects that form so grand and impressive a feature of the wild western territories of the States.

Of the many thousands who go to Richmond Hill and delight in that popular and deservedly far-famed view—of these thousands, how many, I wonder,

are even aware of this other and grander view of the same river? Richmond Hill is stamped with the hall-mark of fashion, crowds of Londoners flock thither yearly, a vast hotel permits the worthy Briton to fare luxuriously whilst he admires the scene, and the average Briton can combine these two things to his own great satisfaction. Whereas at the Langdon hills there is only a primitive inn, cosy and comfortable in its way truly, but guiltless of *tables-d'hôte*, and possessing not even a single black-coated waiter; a rustic hostel that proclaims itself with the good old-fashioned sign. When we were there we had the view all to ourselves, nor did we enjoy it the less because of the absence of the professional excursionist. Perchance some day this spot will become fashionable and famous, a grand hotel will take the place of the unpretentious little inn, and the Langdon hills become the rendezvous of sightseers. The speculative builder may then put in an unwelcome appearance, and cover the pleasant hill side with his 'desirable residences' in the Victorian villa, the pseudo-Queen Anne, or some other style for the time in vogue, as assertive and commonplace as stucco or cheap brick and plate-glass can make them. Bran new buildings, spic-and-span, may supersede the rural cottages whose windows are leaden-lattice merely and roofs of primitive thatch, but oh! how homely and picturesque! Well, on the whole, perhaps it is best that the Langdon hills should remain unknown and unfamed.



## CHAPTER II.

A Forsaken Church—East Horndon—The resting place of Queen Anne Boleyn's Head—Relics—Herongate—An old Coaching Inn—Chat with an Ostler—A Wayside Memorial—A Fine Sign—The Pleasures of Photography—Ingatestone—The Scene of 'Lady Audley's Secret'—Margaretting—A Unique Brass—A Quaint Sign-board.

LEAVING our rustic little hostel we proceeded along the crest of the Langdon hills past a new stone church that has been built upon the very summit—a landmark for miles around—then we descended by a tree-shaded winding lane that would not have discredited Devonshire to the lowland country once again. The hill side to our right, sloping down to the sunlit country, was covered with woods, the ground beneath the trunks of the trees was literally carpeted with wild hyacinths, a miracle of colour, a deep pure ultramarine that made even the blue of the sky above seem pale. How nature can paint when she chooses! Proceeding on our way, we came upon the cosy little vicarage, whose gable ends peeped pleasantly through the foliage, and whose chimneys, we observed, were ingeniously planned to prevent their smoking; the design, manifestly the outcome of necessity, was not the ungainly feature such contrivances mostly are, but quaintly original, and picturesque rather than the reverse, a vast improve-

ment upon the graceless chimney-pots and hideous cowls that pretend to cure smoky chimneys in London. And if the arrangement answers its purpose, and it looked as if it should, it goes to prove that utility need not always be synonymous with ugliness.

Reaching the foot of the hill we came to an ancient and forsaken-looking church ; deserted, dilapidated, and picturesque, manifestly disused now that a new and larger edifice has been raised upon the top of the hill. More spacious this latter, possibly more convenient for modern worship, certainly more pompous, but having no history it did not appeal to our feelings as did this tiny humble fane, grey and worn with age, whose lowly walls are hallowed with the prayers of departed generations of 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet,' who now sleep so peacefully in the modest graves around. For the warrior and statesman, for the noble and the rich, the ostentatious altar-tomb, or at least a marble monument ; for the poor tiller of the fields, whose ceaseless toil has made the beauty of the land, a nameless, unnoted, grass-grown mound !

These humble village fanes that are such a characteristic feature of the English country are truly 'sermons in stones' as eloquent as any poem. What a sad and solemn note they sometimes strike in the smiling landscape, with their sorrowful colony of graves and mournful yews, when all around seems so mutable and full of life ! But enough of moralising—let us away into the sweet sunlit country, where the men are busy haymaking in the meadows,

(whose labour is, surely, the very poetry of toil), to the open country where the birds are singing in the hedges and the woods right merrily, and where all Nature seems in a joyous mood. Even the momentary glance we had in passing of that forsaken and mournful churchyard made us feel still more, by the cheerful contrast, the gladsomeness and brightness of that summer day, the enlivening effect of the golden sunshine and the inspiring greeting of the bracing breezes that met us as we drove along.

A pleasant stretch of level country, with nothing particular of note on the way, took us through Dunton to East Horndon, which latter village possesses a very interesting church with nothing melancholy about it. This church contains a chapel, with monuments to the Tyrell family, whose crest, a Boar's Head, is still represented on the sign of the village inn; in the chapel are preserved an ancient tilting helmet with crest, an old sword, and a pair of gauntlets. On the floor is an incised memorial slab bearing the date of 1422, said to be the finest known. It is to Alice Lady Tyrell, and gives her figure at full length and almost life size, with the peculiar head-dress of the period, her body being draped with a loose robe. This fine slab also contains representations of her ten children, each one bearing a scroll with his or her separate name thereon. But perhaps even more interesting than all is an altar-tomb beneath which, tradition states, is buried the head of the unfortunate Queen Anne Boleyn, and, as an old body sagely remarked to me, 'there is no record of her head being buried else-

where, so the tradition must be true.' A very simple and ready way it seemed to me of proving facts and making history. I may state here that there was hardly a church that we visited during our drive but was fraught with interest for us. Strange and even ghastly relics that somehow escaped the ruthless hands of the Puritans (though, to do him justice, from what we could gather the notorious William Dowsing during his visitation in these parts did his utmost to utterly destroy all superstitious pictures, relics, crucifixes, and the like); many curious brasses we also discovered, sundry quaint epitaphs, strange and puzzling inscriptions, singular frescoes, odd conceits in carved wood and stone, besides numerous other things that would gladden the heart of any antiquary; but as all these will be described in detail hereafter, there is no need to say more of them at present. I would only add that were this eastern portion of England really 'as flat as a pancake,' and as entirely devoid of scenic attractions as many people wrongly imagine it to be, still even then the journey we took would have been well worth the taking, if only to see the rare old churches, to say nothing of the grand old manor houses, stately half-timbered homes, ruined castles, picturesque old coaching inns, the ancient country towns full of irregular rows of gabled buildings, so delightfully unlike the uniform streets of commercial cities, and other tokens of man's past presence and handiwork.

The next place that we came to was Herongate, a primitive village like most others in these parts—

primitive, but fairly claiming to be picturesque as well, with its spreading green and small sheet of water, beside which stands the rural hostel. An artist might find more than one picture at this spot. We noticed here, what we have now and again, though not very frequently, observed in various other parts of the country, the name of the village plainly painted on the Post Office. This information, being no news for the inhabitants, must of course be for the benefit of travellers by road, and as these now are few and far between, we presume that the name of the place being thus shown is a relic of the past coaching-days not yet (in these parts, where changes come slowly and ancient customs linger still) improved away.

If Herongate is picturesque in itself, it is blest with two of the ugliest places of worship, I think, that we have ever come upon. I make this statement after due deliberation, for in course of our many drives through different portions of England (covering altogether some thousands of miles) we have certainly come across not a few unique specimens of ungainly structures ; but these, I verily believe, excel them all for perfected ugliness, for it almost seems as if there could be a perfection of ugliness as well as a perfection of beauty.

The first of the two edifices in question was a small square brick structure, the design of which was surely taken from a box, with holes cut in for windows and a top just to keep the rain out—simplicity itself, but without any added charm of picturesqueness. We learnt from a notice-board that this was the

Peculiar People's Chapel, and a very peculiar people we thought they must be, to make no attempt (even if unsuccessful) in any way to beautify or adorn the paltry and painfully plain edifice that manifestly they deem good enough for the God they worship. Its plainness would almost suffice to have disgusted a Puritan, had it been erected in his day. Yet in saying all this, I must not forget that even in wealthy and luxurious London but too frequently it is merely 'the outside of the platter' that is beautified, for is it not a fact that very many of the sacred edifices that have been erected there of late years have those portions of them that do not face the street, and are therefore not seen by the multitude, as plainly and cheaply built as possible? Outside show, a pitiful veneer on a house devoted to the worship of the all-seeing God :—

The front he makes of stone, as fine as any abbey,  
And then to cheat his Lord, he makes the back part shabby.

The other edifice was the church of Herongate, finely situated on rising ground, a short distance from the village, and, though the assertion may appear an anomaly, this actually had a kind of fascination for us on account of its very brazen ugliness. The massive tower of brick is in no style of architecture whatever, as far as I am aware. From an inscription upon it we learnt that it was built in the year of grace, if not of taste, MDCCXXXIV. This precious structure, as far as our experience went, was 'the exception that proves the rule' as to the antiquarian and archæological interest of the country churches of this portion of England. But what could

one expect of an eighteenth-century church? As seen from a short way off, we really thought that this pile of bricks was the engine-house belonging to some waterworks, and ugly even for that!

Who was the architect of this strange erection, I wonder, and what manner of man was he? It struck us forcibly that he had striven in this tower to be original, anxious above all things to show his own cleverness, disregarding of the time-tried work of others, possibly it may be that in his pride he conceived the idea of inventing a new style of architecture altogether. A man who would design a church thus must surely be very vain or very stupid, or both.

People who build should bear in mind how great is their responsibility, for even one such eyesore in bricks and mortar as this, visible for miles around, spoils the landscape to a greater or less extent. It asserts itself and attracts the eye whether it will or no; there is no escape from it. I write feelingly in the matter, for I know more than one pretty peep of country whose sylvan loveliness, so charming and restful to the town-tired eye, has to me been forever destroyed by the unsightly structures raised therein; freaks in bricks and mortar these, caprices in building to laugh at, were it not a matter to grieve about, this ruthless spoiling of scenery. How sadly these prosaic structures contrast with the poems in buildings that our ancestors loved to raise, in a benighted age, when men had their houses fashioned to suit their individual tastes, not as now run up by contract in whole streets, rows, and terraces, as like

to one another as peas in a pod, and as undesirable to live in as to look upon, the man of to-day having to fit into his dwelling like a hermit crab as best he may. An old-time home, with its many high-pitched gables, clustering stacks of chimneys, tiled irregular roofs, mullioned windows (so pleasantly varied by transom and quarrelled glass), half-timber fronts, projecting upper stories (when needed), weather-tiling, and ample porches that almost speak a welcome; an old-time home like this is as delightful to gaze upon as any painted picture, and more so than a great many.

A man with no taste may furnish the interior of his house so that it is unutterably vulgar and eye-irritating to the cultivated mind, but this the public do not see and it only affects the owner and his friends; but the exterior of a house more or less concerns everybody, for this becomes a part of the landscape, and either adds to or takes from its beauty. In a thickly-populated country like England, whose scenery is so closely associated with the homes of the people, it is terrible to think how much it is in the power of unsympathetic man to rob it of its traditional loveliness.

Leaving Herongate we skirted a finely wooded park (said to be the largest in the county) in which stands the deserted and ruined mansion of Thorndon Hall, the former seat of Lord Petre. Shortly after passing this we reached Brentwood. Here we baited our horses at the White Hart, a very ancient inn, one of the oldest coaching hostleries now existing in England, one that before the



railway age must have seen much coming and going and have been full of life and bustle, situated as it was on the high road to the important towns of Chelmsford, Ipswich, and Colchester, to say nothing of Yarmouth and places of lesser fame.

The White Hart at Brentwood contains an excellent example of the arcaded courtyard that forms such a delightful feature in the hostels of that period, an arrangement happily combining both utility and picturesqueness. These ample courtyards (a necessity of the time) with their rambling out-buildings, their wealth of stabling, have a special attraction for me, they have such a genuine old-time flavour and are so suggestive of the poetry and romance of the days gone by.

The ostler here we found to be an old man, and like the rest of his class inclined to be communicative, so we led him on to tell us all he knew about the place. We soon discovered that he was one of the ever-narrowing circle of those who were ostlers in the coaching age. 'Yes, sir,' he said to us in reply to a remark of ours, 'it be a queer rambling building, that it be. I remember it well when I were a boy, and most of the coaches on the road used to change horses here. It were "four up" or "four down," all day long, there weren't much quiet then; plenty to do and plenty to get for that matter, for the tips came pretty often. Seventy-two coaches passed the old house in the twenty-four hours; them was lively times. I can well remember when fifty coach-horses and upwards were kept in these stables, besides fifteen "posters," and post-boys booted and spurred

were always ready to start on the call of "next turn." While the worthy ostler was telling us his story of the past, we got our sketch-book out and made a sketch of the quaint wooden galleries around, which act on our part drew his attention to them. 'Yes,' he continued, 'I remember them galleries when they were crowded with travellers, servants, and luggage, very different to the deserted look they have nowadays. Who then would have imagined that people would ever travel behind an iron horse? The Lion and the Lamb was the other coaching house, but this was the chief inn and we used to get all the best custom.' Then in company of our chatty ostler we took a look round the old stables; built mainly of timber, browned and bent now, but still strong and apparently able to endure for years. How massively these men of the olden time built; timber in these parts was manifestly plentiful in the past, as is plainly shown by the generous use of it in preference to brick or stone. Our ancestors too had not in those days, it must be remembered, learnt how to build with a minimum of material, so that their structures have a look of substance and solid strength very grateful to the eye accustomed to the mean and trivial erections of these times, raised by contract, at the least cost, with little thought of lasting strength. Why, I believe that Buggins, the speculative builder, would easily contrive four stables out of the material of one of these old ones, and even then have spare material. Whether the new stables would last as long or require as little attention in the way of repairs, is quite another matter.

Leaving Brentwood, by the side of the way we came upon a fine granite obelisk. We pulled up to inspect this, and to discover from the inscription thereon the cause of its erection. This we copied as follows :—

TO THE PIOUS MEMORY OF  
WILLIAM HUNTER,  
A NATIVE OF BRENTWOOD,  
WHO  
WAS CONDEMNED AT THE EARLY AGE OF NINETEEN,  
BY BISHOP BONNER, IN THE REIGN OF QUEEN MARY,  
AND BURNT AT THE STAKE  
NEAR THIS SPOT.  
MARCH XXVI, MDLV.

I have given this inscription, because in these days when travellers by road are about as scarce as eagles in the land, these wayside monuments (of which there are many, and some of great interest scattered throughout the country) are known and seen by few.

At Mountnessing, the first village we came to after leaving Brentwood, we again made a short stop, attracted by the fine and elaborate scroll-work of wrought iron that supports the sign of the rural hostel there; the George and Dragon, to wit. This charming and interesting bit of iron-handicraft delighted us, so pleasing and full of purpose is it, yet withal so simple in design. The art of making decorative, and even a thing of beauty, a commonplace everyday piece of work such as this (merely to perform the humble office of holding a country inn sign) seems almost gone from us. In this ambitious age we seek for grandeur and ostentatious

show, we raise imposing structures if we do not build mightily, and by mere size we secure a certain pseudo-dignity, unmindful or careless of the real grace of minor things and well-studied detail. It is the sum of these unconsidered trifles, the fanciful conceits and playfulness of their designs, that charms us so in most old work, and which is so sadly conspicuous by its absence in that which is new. Even when we do condescend to trouble ourselves as to the design of some plain contrivance, we multiply it indefinitely by machinery; having a good thing we repeat it so that at last it becomes monotonous and wearisome by the ever-recurring sameness. The numerous fine specimens of wrought iron-work that still remain to us, standing for sign-posts beside the once thriving but now almost deserted coaching inns, prove how even a simple thing can be made effective and artistic as well as useful, when the workman loves his work.

So pleased were we with the picturesque sign of the little inn at Mountnessing, that we unpacked our camera and exposed a plate upon it: which proceeding on our part, as usual, caused a small crowd of men and boys to collect around us, and who insisted on posing themselves exactly where we did not want them, in order that they might be in the picture. Why, I wonder, do people so delight to be included in a photograph which in all probability they will never see?

The camera we found of great service in quickly and correctly securing for us bits of architecture, such as quaint carvings, altar-tombs, ornamental



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doorways, gargoyles, and the like. For those who cannot sketch, the camera (now that photography is made such a simple and easy operation) is a most delightful addition to the kit of the driving tourist, who, as his conveyance always waits upon him, has all the pleasure of the instrument without its ever becoming a burden. A small photographic outfit (which need not be expensive) adds vastly to the interest of such an outing as ours, as by the aid of the camera many a pretty picture may be taken, or the representation of anything of interest on the way that may strike the traveller may be speedily and with little trouble secured. Thus any one unhappily unskilled in drawing may yet be able to bring back home with him many a pleasing photographic picture to recall to his mind various beauty-spots and places of interest he may have come upon during the course of his journey.

As we were packing up our photographic paraphernalia, one of the party that gathered around us (upon what authority I know not) volunteered the information that the sign was the finest in the country (we presumed he meant county), and that it cost over fifty pounds, and he further remarked that it had been made in the neighbourhood.

A short and pleasant stage brought us to Ingatestone, a quiet picturesque little town, long spread out, one of those places which, owing to their position on the main highway, prospered greatly in the days of road travel, but like the rest it seems to have fallen asleep when the last coach took its last change there, and never to have had the energy to waken

again. Contrary to the general rule in country places, where everyone appears to take a particular interest in any strangers that may pass their way, as far as we observed nobody disturbed themselves about us, or troubled to discuss who we were or where we came from, unless it were the landlord of the clean-looking little Bell Inn, who stared at us in a languid sort of a manner ; but then he was possibly interested in the way of business.

It was a pleasing and somewhat unusual experience for us to be able to sketch in and explore a country town without our movements rousing the curiosity of even one of its youthful inhabitants ; to be enabled to stare about us without being stared at in return. How such places manage to exist at all, without any apparent business, having no attractions for the tourist or angler to make up for the loss of other custom, has frequently puzzled me. Even the hostels in such places seem to make a brave show of outward well-being, though one would imagine, now the need that caused their former prosperity has long since disappeared, that the limited local custom would hardly suffice to pay the rent alone, even were such custom all profit. But the wanderer by road, if observantly inclined and if he troubles himself to think at all, will find many things to wonder at and ponder over as he journeys on. Why in one place where land is plentiful a man should build his house of several stories, so that it would be considered high even in town ; why in another spot we came upon there should be actually two churches in one small churchyard ; why again the road he is



travelling on should laboriously mount a stiff hill between two villages, when a more level way, and a shorter one as well, could as easily have been made in the valley below ; why in one part of the country sign-posts should be found at almost every cross road in good order, with the inscriptions thereon plainly to be read, even sometimes the distances thoughtfully added as well, when in another part he may travel for days and many miles before coming upon one of these useful guides to the wandering stranger, or, if he does come upon one, to discover it either without arms at all or with the lettering weathered away so as to be wholly indecipherable ?

Near to Ingatestone is the hall, a rambling old house of red brick and stone, built in the Tudor style in the reign of Henry VIII. Originally it must have been a very noble mansion, and though certain portions of it have been pulled down and the rest modernised even to the extent of introducing some sash windows, still what remains forms an extensive pile, picturesque as well with its many chimneys and ivy-clad gables. It possesses the inevitable secret hiding chamber without which no important house of those days seems to have been considered complete. But this ancient hall is now chiefly interesting for the air of romance cast over it by fiction, for it is the original from which Miss Braddon drew her picture of Audley Court, and here are laid the principal scenes of her novel, ' Lady Audley's Secret.' The lime-tree walk in which ' my lady ' met her first husband, the old well down which she threw him, the fish-ponds and even the one-handed clock, have

actual existence. On a former journey I came upon and was shown asome what similar old house in like manner made fictionally historic, a veritable romance in bricks and mortar. The old servant who did duty as a guide I found fully believed in the reality of the story and in the personality of the imaginary characters, nor would any words of mine unconvince him. Such is the magic power of the pen, turning fiction into fact and causing the creations of the brain to move, walk, and have their being, causing even, as in the case of Sir Walter Scott, remote spots to be visited by crowds of tourists to behold the scenes where imaginary heroes acted their part, heroes as real to many as those who actually lived and fought and died! Why, I have even had pointed out to me the very spot where the huntsman's horse fell, as described in the 'Lady of the Lake'!

Continuing on our way we passed through a pleasantly undulating country with peeps ever and again of distant blue hills; a country it was that reminded us much of Berkshire. Certainly had we been suddenly set down thereabouts without being told what part of England it was, we should never have guessed that we were in a portion of Essex.

Margaretting was the next village we came to, and again we were tempted to make a short stop to sketch the effective bit of iron-work that supports the sign-board of the Bull Inn. The church here is well worth a visit; it contains an early and very fine 'Jesse' window, and has two picturesque old wooden open porches, but the most interesting feature of the

ancient structure is its remarkable tower. This is constructed entirely of massive beams of oak, black and brown with age. The great timbers are curiously and ingeniously arranged to ensure strength and mutual support. Near to the south door is a unique brass; the figures are unfortunately mutilated and the inscription gone. It represents a knight in armour, with his wife, sons, and daughters, as was the fashion of memorials of the time, but what is especially remarkable about this brass is that the faces of the effigies are given in profile. I know of no other instance in which a profile is shown on a brass instead of the full face, and I believe that there is no other record of such a departure from the general custom that then obtained.

This old turnpike and coaching road along which we were travelling is studded with villages and thoroughfare towns; every few miles we came upon a smaller or larger collection of houses, and so, shortly after leaving Margaretting we found ourselves at Widford. The inn signs of Essex are frequently of interest, and here once more our attention was arrested by the curious old sign-board of the village public-house. This has on one side of it a pictorial representation of bluff King Hal, on the other a woman without a head, intended we were informed for the unfortunate Queen Anne Boleyn. It would be interesting to learn the origin and true history of this quaint sign.

## CHAPTER III.

We come across a Character—Origin of the Names of Places—Guide-books at fault—The 'Good Woman'—An old half-timbered Hostelry—Roadside England—The Love of the Country—Boreham—A Fine Altar-tomb—The Ancient Craftsman and the Modern Workman—An Old English Farmstead—The Farm of the Future—Cottage Gardens—Witham—At the Sign of the White Hart—The Kindness of Country People—How to discover Objects of Interest—A Fruitless Expedition—'Ghosts not kept here.'

AT Chelmsford, the next town on our road, we elected to stay the night at the sign of the Saracen's Head. In the coffee-room of the inn there we made friends with another traveller, who from his conversation was evidently an antiquary, and truly he looked his part, dressed as he was like a gentleman of the old school, fifty years at least behind time in regard to the fashion of his clothes; evidently purposely so, for the quality was good although the cut seemed quaint to our unfamiliar eyes. Manifestly we had come upon an original character, no mere stage make-believe, and we rejoiced in the fact, for in these days of slavish uniformity, a genuine character is a great relief to the wearisome monotony of multitudes.

We always make it a point when on a journey, as far as may lie in our power, to make friends with those people chance may throw in our path. Many

an interesting conversation and much odd out-of-the-way information as to local legends, family histories, folk-lore, curious customs, and I know not what else besides, have we picked up by so doing. We found that even a plough-boy could tell us something that we did not know before, as to the habits of birds, the names of the less common wild flowers and plants, and other matters pertaining to the life of the hedges and fields, which were as familiar to him as they were fresh to us : the country lad is not of those who

Love not the flower they pluck and know it not,  
And all their botany is but Latin names.

But I am digressing ; to return to our antiquarian friend, we had a long and entertaining chat with him that evening about many things. During the course of the conversation he informed us that the road we had travelled from Brentwood was not only the old coaching highway to Colchester, but that it followed also the exact line of the ancient Roman street thither. Then we had a long discussion as to the origin of the names of the places we had passed through. It is always interesting to trace back the derivation of the names of country towns and villages, for frequently they have a real reason for their appellation, even sometimes helping to explain history or to hand down the exact spot where certain events took place, as for instance Slaughter Bridge in Cornwall where King Arthur fell mortally wounded. Thus the sleepy little town of Ingatestone, where we rested as we came along, is derived from *Ing*, a meadow, at-ye-stone ; a Roman

mile stone having stood in a field at this spot. In like manner Margaretting, is from Margaret and *Ing*, that is St. Margaret's meadow, the ancient church there being dedicated to that saint. Widford, at which spot the road crosses the river Wid, manifestly explains itself, at least so I should have imagined ; but for all that, one of the precious guide-books I took with me deliberately states that it comes from the 'Wide ford over the river Can,' not by any means a single or the worst instance of inaccuracy I have discovered in these curious compilations, only unfortunately their mistakes as to facts are not always so readily to be discovered, for in this case we did not even come upon the Can at Widford. Some of the errors of omission and commission of the guide-book writers are both astonishing and amusing, as we shall see hereafter.

Though I believe there can be but little doubt that we were right as to the derivation of Widford, it is not wise to jump too readily at a conclusion in such matters, even when such seems self-evident. For upon a former journey, seeing an old map with the very ancient and little town of Alfriston in Sussex spelt thereon Aldfriston, and knowing that there was a short way off a younger though still very ancient village of Friston, we at once inferred that Alfriston was a name evolved from Ald-Friston, or Old Friston, the prefix we presumed being added to distinguish the place from the other Friston, and we should certainly have deemed our conclusion to be correct, had we not afterwards by mere chance, upon looking over some musty works

of ancient date, discovered that Alfriston really derived its name from Alfred's ton (Alfred's town), King Alfred, according to history, having been at one time here, the Domesday Book as well confirming the fact in its spelling of the place.

Our antiquarian friend had also something to say as to the quaint inn-sign at Widford; this he told us is known by the name of the Good Woman. First it was called the Silent Woman, because having her head cut off the poor woman naturally could not speak; it would seem that in times past the Essex people did not esteem it a virtue for their wives to do much talking, and so as this woman was perforce silent she became to them the Good Woman, all of which, as our friend stated, was as true as most traditions are, and I dare say he was right.

We did not find much of interest in Chelmsford, which town appeared to us more prosperous than picturesque; alas! that these terms should nowadays never seem synonymous! In rambling about the place we did however come upon one old-time building that delighted us: an ancient inn it was, a half-timbered structure of the fifteenth century, 'Y<sup>e</sup> Old Cross Keys' as its sign-board informed us. A clean and neat little hostel with bright flowers in its windows, somewhat modernised the rest of the old house, but fortunately its quaint and cosy look had not been altogether improved away. It was truly a picture in the prosaic street, and redeemed it from being wholly common-place. We could not resist the temptation to make a sketch of this ancient bit of architecture, even

though by so doing we attracted around us a small crowd of inquisitive little boys, besides one curious specimen of a worthy and doubtless useful citizen, who could not understand why we should waste our time 'sketching that insignificant old place' when there was a big town hall much better worth drawing, built all of stone (or at least the front), 'a handsome building that any town might be proud of,' and which, he said, cost I forget how many thousand pounds. He reminded us forcibly of a certain American gentleman who courteously showed us over his native 'city,' and when calling our attention to the various fine buildings therein was careful to inform us how many dollars each one cost, the fineness of the structure appearing in his estimation to greatly, if not wholly, depend upon the number of dollars expended upon it.

How mean that charming unpretentious bit of past-time building made the featureless modern houses that compose the rest of the street appear, with all their pretentiousness, their tedious sameness of outline, and want of architectural purpose.

Leaving Chelmsford, we observed to the right of us, as we drove out of the town, an old pump near to a disused graveyard, with the notice 'This Pump is closed by order of the Sanitary Authorities,' which action appeared to us a very wise exercise of power on their part, though why, if it was not considered safe to use, the pump was not altogether removed puzzled us. It would be well if all rural sanitary authorities were as regardful of the welfare of the people. At one village, when on a previous



tour, we came upon a well situated actually right in the middle of the churchyard, and this was being used by the villagers to obtain their supply of water ; had we not seen this for ourselves, we certainly could not have credited that such a thing would be allowed in these days. At many farmhouses, too, on the way, we noticed that the pump was placed adjoining the farmyard, so that the water could hardly fail to be contaminated ; indeed this most undesirable arrangement appeared to us to be the rule rather than the reverse, possibly for the convenience of watering the cattle, and those we spoke to on the matter could see no harm in the arrangement.

Another thing that caused us some surprise (or rather, perhaps I should more correctly say, would have done so, had we not been prepared for it by former experience) is the apparent objection that country people seem to have against admitting fresh air into their homes, for even upon the finest summer day it was nothing unusual to find all the windows of the houses and cottages we passed by strictly closed, and if a cotter had a pane broken this was sure to be carefully pasted up. Indeed, so much does this closing of windows prevail in country places, as though they were never intended to open, that we made it a rule upon arriving at our inn to first of all visit our room and at once admit a supply of fresh air thereto.

The country between Chelmsford and Witham is exceedingly beautiful, well wooded and well watered, rich in foliage, a treeful land, dotted every

here and there with pleasant rural homes, from the stately mansion standing in its finely-timbered park to the humble ivy-grown cottage with its tiny garden of old-fashioned flowers, gay of colour and sweet of perfume, but whether grand or lowly each old home was in charming harmony with its surroundings, and added therefore to the beauty of the prospect.

We passed through a country thoroughly English that day, full of the poetry of civilisation and with none of its ugliness, a peaceful pastoral land into which the bustle and haste of this busy century has not yet penetrated, a country that has changed little if any of its characteristics in all these changeful centuries. It seemed as if some magic spell was cast over all to preserve its ancient peace and quietude. Man and Nature have long been here familiar friends, and all the spreading loveliness we looked upon is the outcome of their long companionship.

Unfortunately, Englishmen, when they do condescend to travel at all at home, mostly rush to thronged watering-places or slavishly follow in well-beaten tourist tracks, fashion-led or guide-book directed ; they have therefore little or no knowledge of the old-world calm, the restful quietude, the eye-delighting, heart-filling beauty of the everyday scenery of rural England, a veritable earthly paradise travelled now by few, as the grass-grown roads often but too plainly prove, and practically therefore unseen save by the local inhabitants ; a country whose rare charms are unspoilt by modern prosperity or the presence

of the professional tourist, whose powers of spoiling the fairest scenery are woefully great. The majority of Englishmen know not this untravelled land, and have not therefore the deep-rooted love of it that comes alone from long intimacy, a love our ancestors held as a most precious thing ; but then our forefathers lived in closer communion with Nature than we do now. The glare and flash of electricity, and the rush and roar of steam, had not blinded them to the charm of simple beauty ; the restless, unabiding spirit engendered by the cheap and speedy railway had not taken possession of them. It is the mellow, homelike beauty of our ancient land, with the bloom of ages over all, that gladdens so both heart and eye, a beauty revealed only to the leisurely wanderer along its devious by-ways, tree-shaded lanes, and pleasant footpaths. The scenery of roadside England is not exciting ; there is nothing very wonderful or strange about it ; there is no need of strong adjectives to describe it ; it is neither grand nor sublime—merely beautiful, but oh ! how great is its dower of beauty ! What a revelation of loveliness it is to anyone who has not yet had that delightful experience, to walk or drive through an English county simply in search of the picturesque, careless of his course, careful only to avoid large towns, and to keep as far as may be from the iron way.

At the pleasant hamlet of Boreham we came upon a well-timbered park, with two avenues of trees leading from the road to the hall ; between these was a long straight stretch of water ; the quaint formality of the arrangement gave the place

quite a Dutch look, whether originally intended or not.

The church at Boreham (dedicated to St. Andrew) is very interesting, and shows a wonderful variety of styles of architecture, from the early Norman, or it may be even the earlier Saxon (for where learned archæologists dispute how can an ignorant layman feel certain?), to the Late Perpendicular, a little history in stone to him who can read it. This church contains an exceedingly fine altar-tomb in a chapel built to contain it by the Earl of Sussex some time in the sixteenth century; the altar-tomb is of many-coloured marbles, with effigies of warriors in complete armour most carefully and painstakingly carved even to the smallest detail. These ancient altar-tombs with their effigies of knights must be of the greatest interest and value to the antiquary, showing as they do the arrangement and manner of wearing the armour at different past periods, so minutely finished and exactly reproduced even to a rivet, that one feels almost as though by some strange magic the ancient armour had been suddenly converted into stone; the sculptured faces, too, are veritable likenesses of the brave dead that lie in the vault beneath; we can thus in some measure gather from them what manner of men our ancestors were. Before such work one can only stand silent and grieved that we cannot do the like; the spirit and the innate love of art that animated the workman of the past is gone from us, alas! I fear for ever; our workmen now are workmen merely; we have only too successfully

turned them into machines ; once they were artists. With what consummate skill, with what loved labour, the mediæval craftsmen converted the meaningless marble or inanimate metal into

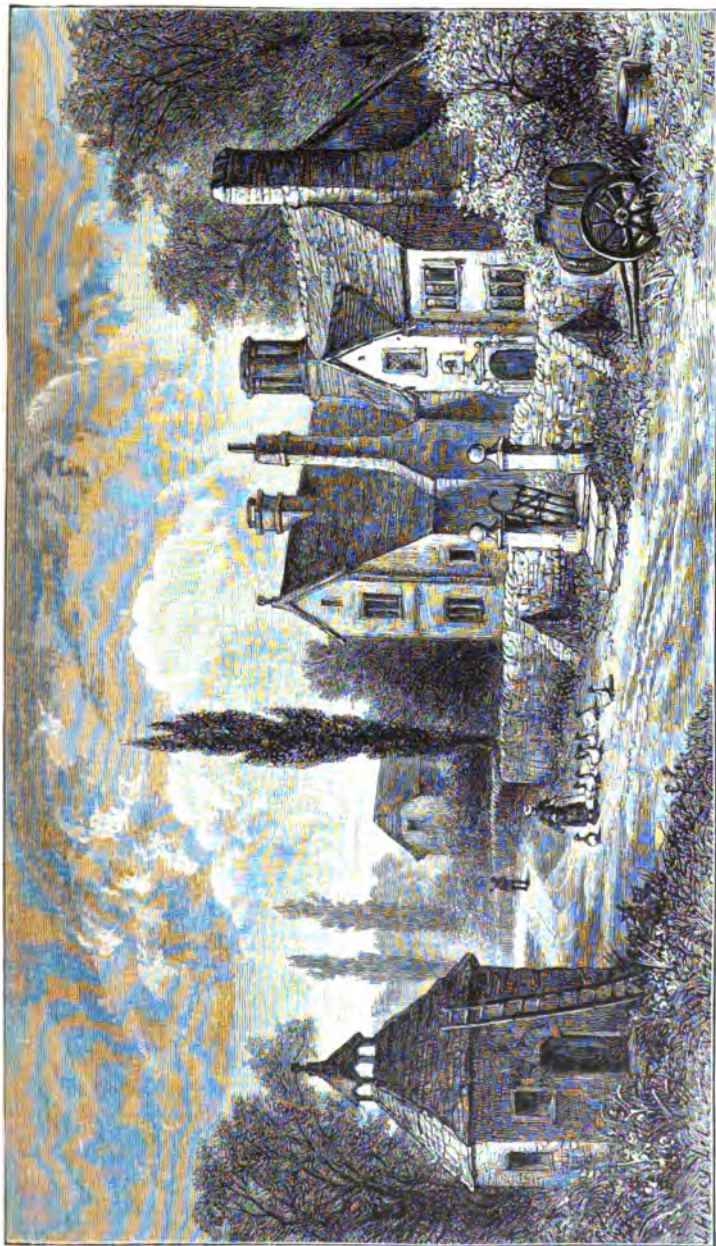
The stone that breathes and struggles,  
The brass that seems to speak.

Shall we ever again, I wonder, approach even to the standard of the long ago, of a time (however undesirable in some respects, still for all that a glorious time) when we Englishmen were an art-loving and art-producing race. For who but an art-loving people could have conceived or raised our magnificent cathedrals, with all their wealth of beauty, their grandeur and gracefulness, the culmination of gothic glory : miracles in architecture that plainly speak of the masterful inventiveness and daring genius of their designers ; poems in stone that, in a money-making age of utility and ugliness, still stand here and there in the land, silent monuments of a lost art of building ?

Shortly after leaving Boreham we came to an ancient farmstead, literally so drowned in greenery as to allow us merely a peep of its many gables and mighty stacks of chimneys, one of those old homes (once the yeoman's pride) to be found nowhere outside the four seas that encircle our island home. I wonder if the old-fashioned rambling farmhouse, with its great barns, rickyards, cowsheds, stabling, and picturesque outbuildings gathered around it in such a delightfully irregular manner, will endure for another generation ? Of all the homes of the people, surely the old farmhouse of our boyhood days is the most de-

lightful to think about. What recollections it calls up of haymaking, reaping, gleaning, of rides in the harvest waggons, of rabbit shooting, and it may be fishing, or blackberrying and nutting; of feasts of strawberries, raspberries, currants, and other fruits, gathered fresh from the garden; and what a perfect playground for children the fields around made, with bird-nesting for a change when tired of games; very wrong and cruel this, of course, but then 'boys will be boys!' I pity the lad who has never spent a summer holiday in a genuine old-time farmhouse. But we live in an age of changes, changes that come upon us almost without our knowing that they have taken place, and I greatly fear that the farmstead of our easy-going forefathers is slowly but surely being improved away. So picturesque, so beloved of poet and painter, so suggestive of plenty and prosperity, with its fat ricks around and bird-haunted barns, above all so essentially English, we can ill afford to lose the dear old farmstead.

The observant traveller through rural England cannot close his eyes to the alterations that are steadily taking place in agricultural matters. We must progress with the times or be left behind, and, whether it please us or no, the stern facts of to-day have to be accepted. The pleasant old farmstead, with its outspreading collection of barns, sheds, and other buildings, so suggestive of contented abiding, is, alas, in all human probability doomed. No such solid and spacious buildings of the kind are now being raised, the rent of land will not allow of it; moreover the ample barns—so essentially picturesque, without



AN OLD-TIME FARMSTEAD





which a farmhouse never seems complete—are no longer needful now that the corn is quickly thrashed by steam ; the capital, too, that is required in the present day to stock and work an extensive holding (which only can support such a capacious home and its time-honoured surroundings) is considerable ; for unless the land is scientifically cultivated, and the latest improved agricultural instruments are employed, the modern farmer cannot hold his own under the changed conditions of competition caused by the opening up of new lands abroad, combined with the rapid and cheap conveyance by steam, which has practically brought these new lands to our own doors. The past order of things, the old-fashioned method of farming, the conservative rotation of crops, that paid fifty years ago, will not pay now.

What will the farm of the future be like, and what manner of man will the coming farmer be ? Agricultural affairs are in a state of transition, the change that is approaching, though certain, is so gradual, that it is almost impossible to anticipate.

Where all is vague, one thing alone seems sure, namely, that the change will be intensely practical ; when money-making is concerned all æsthetic ideas must inevitably go to the wall, the picturesque past will have to give way to the necessities of the prosaic present. Progress and beauty in these times seem ever at enmity, science and machinery are but too surely robbing us of the poetry of husbandry.

Much that is picturesque in farm life is unhappily rapidly disappearing, agricultural operations are becoming more and more mechanical, the labourer

is, in a measure, being converted into an engineer. As the smoke-begrimed engine-driver and fussy locomotive have taken the place of the jovial Jehu and the cheery coach, in like manner the steam-plough or cultivator (the most ungainly product of man's brain) is taking the place of the old-fashioned team of our forefathers ; the slow flail, after existing for centuries unchanged, has been superseded by the speedy steam-thresher ; mowing and reaping machines in turn are monopolising the work of the graceful mower and the romantic reaper, and, sadder still, even the fragrant hayfield is threatened by the scientific silo, and withal the farmer is no better off (in truth, he grumbles more than ever), beauty is surely disappearing, and no one seems to be benefited.

What will the future poet and painter do with the country life that is to be ? It is hard to grow sentimental over puffing steam-engines and unsightly machinery ; it is harder still to paint such things into pictures ; yet when they have become part and parcel of the rural economy of the land they cannot be ignored.

The factory-like puffing of steam-threshers and steam-ploughs, the unmelodious rattle, rattle, rattle of mowing and reaping machines (as ear-irritating as eye-displeasing) seem wholly out of place in the peaceful uncommercial country, and rob it of its charming, rest-bestowing quietude. Nowadays discordant noises but too often take the place of pleasant rural sounds, for it must be remembered that there is a wide distinction between noise and sound. The sounds one hears in the country—the songs of birds,

the gurgling and plashing of water, the gentle rustling of the leaves of windblown trees, the soft murmur of standing corn just stirred by the breeze, the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cattle, are all soothing to the ear; indeed they serve as a foil to accentuate the general quietness, to make the stillness more profound; but the busy, fussy, clattering and harsh din of machinery is the very antithesis of reposefulness, steam and machinery seem wholly out of place in the green meadows and pleasant country fields.

I think that on no stage of our drive were we so impressed as on this with the wonderful variety of colour we observed on every hand, not only of flowers, both wild and garden-grown, but of the fields, and trees, and hedgerows; the old buildings, too, with their time-tinted walls and lichen-laden roofs, delighted us, the rich warm red hue of the tiles contrasting charmingly with the cool greens around. The may was out late, and so this June we saw it in all its fragrant freshness and fulness; the chestnut trees were doing their best to rival the may, and the many creepers of various kinds that seemed to have their home and flourish on every bit of old building abounded in blossoms of yellow and red, of white and purple; familiar by sight most of these, though some were strange, but of the names of the majority I must, to my shame, confess my scandalous ignorance. Fortunately, however, beauty does not depend upon nomenclature, and my sad want of botanical knowledge did in no measure deprive me of the full enjoyment of their loveliness.

The little cottage gardens by the way, how gay

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they looked with their bright homely flowers—dearer far to me from old association and long familiarity than the rarest productions of the rich man's greenhouse. I am not of those who despise a flower because it is common ; a wild primrose nestles nearer to my heart than does the aristocratic rose, beautiful and sweet of perfume though the latter be.

The landscape, too, was full of colour, the meadows were golden and silver with buttercups and daisies, here and there we noticed fields splashed with the glowing yellow of wild mustard, others were crimson with blossoming clover, the dainty green of the young corn enhanced the showy scarlet of the wild poppy, and in the tangled hedgerows we saw now and again the harmless gold of the ever-blooming gorse mingled in a rare harmony with other plants and countless many-tinted wild flowers that thrive, uncared for and unheeded, by the dusty wayside. It was all sunshine and cheerful colouring, and yet there are to be found people who live in less favoured spots in the world, who boldly assert that England is a dull, dispiriting, colourless land, a land all of greys and greens, with sad skies and little sunshine. Surely there are some who are wilfully blind ! I pity the man who can travel through rural England and see nothing but dull greens and sombre greys. As for sunshine, well, I must own that perhaps we could do with more of it, though personally I love our English cloud-decked sky and would not exchange it for one of Italian blue, with nothing to vary its monotonous serenity save the sun in its daily round. To those who have ever

studied it, the scenery of cloud-land is no less lovely and diversified than scenery terrestrial. It is infinitely changeful and full of interest, but who regards the sky above, that is free to all, and whose beauties cost nothing to behold save an upward glance?

Witham we found to be a pleasant neat little town, much to-day as it was in the old coaching times, unaltered, unimproved, delightfully unprogressive; a compact place, not straggling about purposelessly as so many provincial towns have a way of doing. As we drove along we were attracted to the White Hart Inn by its inviting outside appearance, which spoke as it were a welcome, nor were we disappointed in our expectations. Inns have their characteristic features as well as human beings, and the experienced traveller is seldom deceived who trusts to their general external look. We found at the White Hart—which, by the way, still retains on its front the old legend, ‘post horses’—a most obliging landlord and a civil motherly landlady, and we were made very comfortable at this homely hostel. In our little sitting-room we observed that a bell-pull hung from the ceiling just over the table, a convenient arrangement that still obtains at some old-fashioned houses, permitting the traveller to ring for anything without having to get up from his seat.

The sign-board of our inn was uncommon in one respect; it had a representation of a white hart, painted and with gilded collar and chain, the animal being cut out so that its contour showed

silhouetted against the sky. It will be remembered (I say this, though I was not aware of the fact till an antiquarian friend mentioned it to me) that the white hart, with a golden collar and chain, once a very favourite and still a frequent inn sign, was the badge of Richard II., which badge was worn by all his courtiers and adherents. It was adopted from his mother, whose cognizance was a white hind.

Besides our comfortable unpretentious hostel, in the main street of Witham is another picturesque, five-gabled, two-storied old inn, built ever so many years ago—the very roadway, we noticed, has been raised since it was first erected—one of those old-time inns that, alas! are, everywhere throughout the land, being gradually improved away to make room for the more ambitious and less comfortable modern hotel.

I got my sketch-book out and made a careful drawing of this bit of ancient architecture, taking my stand on the opposite side of the way (close to a butcher's shop, if I remember aright). As a fair sample of the kindness and consideration that I met with everywhere and from all those whom I came across on the journey, I may mention that the butcher, seeing me standing there, courteously brought out a chair and offered it to me. It was a thoughtful act of civility on his part, that proved him, though a butcher, to be as well a gentleman; moreover he did not peer over my shoulder to see what I was doing, and make remarks as to my sketching, as people often do, nor deem such action rude. Whilst I was at work another inhabitant

of the place, a chemist, came up, who said that he dabbled a little in photography and that if I would care for it he would be most pleased to give me a photograph of the place that he had taken. I thanked him for his kindness and promised to call at his shop for the picture; this was another thoughtful little attention from a perfect stranger.

On calling the next morning for the photograph we had a long chat with the chemist, who learning that we were on a driving tour told us of the very interesting old Tudor embattled mansion of Faulkbourne Hall, two miles off, which he had photographed. We determined at once to profit by the unexpected information, and see the ancient hall, the more especially as he said that it was supposed to be the finest specimen of a Tudor brick inhabited house in the country. We did not rely wholly upon his descriptions, for the photographs of the place that he showed us plainly proved what a picturesque and grand specimen of building it was.

I may, perhaps, here remark that much that was best worth seeing on our outing was brought to our notice in some such wholly unexpected manner. Indeed, this visit to the chemist at Witham suggested to us the idea that there would be nothing lost upon arriving at a country town by our going at once to the local photographer, ostensibly with the purpose of purchasing views, but in reality to learn if there was anything of interest near at hand of which we were unaware. Generally we found if there were any noteworthy ruins, curious old house, remarkable scenery, or anything out of the common

way, it was sure to be photographed and the photograph for sale ; and as the lens is without prejudice, and has not the power of inventing pretty scenery, picturesque places, or romantic ruins, we were able to judge fairly well by the likenesses of the various spots whether they would repay a visit or not.

It is not always wise to place implicit faith in the mere verbal descriptions of places given by country people. Their ideas of the importance or interest of local sights vary considerably ; their enthusiasm often lends wings to their imagination, and they consequently lead one to expect far too much. But a photograph has no such powers of poetic romancing ; it is essentially truthful. Misled once by a glowingly worded description of an old country house, 'the most curious place as ever I comed across, sir. They do tell as how it were built five hundred years ago, and how it be haunted——' and so on for nearly half an hour ; enticed by the long-winded recital, I innocently went out of my way some seven long hilly miles over a detestable road to find a half-ruined farmhouse, neither curious nor yet picturesque. Truly the building was ancient enough, but it was old without being beautiful, and when I inquired of the unsophisticated rustic owner if there were a ghost there, he replied that 'he had never been asked for such an article before ; they didn't keep any and'—hesitatingly—'grow any, but perhaps I might get one at th' squire's—he got most everything.' It is only fair to state that this simple son of the soil was a Welshman, and might possibly have failed to perfectly understand my unadulterated



English, or he might have thought I was trying to make fun of him and that he would pay me back in my own coin with interest added.

Respecting Witham, we learnt of a curious custom that still prevails there. According to the 'Essex Directory,' which useful work we found in the sitting-room of our inn, 'All property within this manor is subject to a fine of one year's value upon the death of the owner or a transfer of the property, to be paid by the successor or purchaser. If, however, the person taking the property were born within the manor, or be already a tenant of it, no such fine is payable. This custom is peculiar, and there are but few instances in which it prevails.'

## CHAPTER IV.

An Ancient Hall—Fine Cedars—A *terra incognita*—Country Lanes and By-ways—A quaint little Church and its History—Puzzling Inscriptions—Curious Names—Tiptree Heath—A Tradition of Dick Turpin—Layer Marney Tower—A Grand Building—A Sixteenth-century Mansion—Friends on the Road—A Notable Structure—A Fine Prospect of River, Land, and Sea.

A VERY pleasant walk through a picturesque pastoral country of green meadows, sparkling streams, and leafy woods, that made the two miles seem like one, took us to Faulkbourne Hall. We found the old mansion (which we reached by a shady avenue through a well-timbered park) to be all that our informant said it was—and more. This romantic home of the olden days, whose ivy-covered, time-stained walls are eloquent of the past, is a picture rather than a place, with its many towers, turrets, gables, mullioned windows, and clustering stacks of chimneys. What a beautiful poem is to commonplace prose, so is Faulkbourne to an ordinary building. It is a house to be seen, not described; for its ancient charm, its old-world picturesqueness, and, above all, the sense of a past presence that seems to brood incumbent over its aged walls, are not to be given in prosaic print. The curious tower gateway here is said to have been erected by the Earl of Gloucester in the reign of King Stephen (1135),

and there is nothing in its appearance to prove otherwise.

A grand old home is Faulkbourne, one after our own romantic imagining—a realised ideal—and we envied the owner its possession. Every whit as picturesque as tourist-haunted Haddon, but never having had the glamour of great deed or thrilling love story thrown over it, it has not gained the wider fame, and is, therefore, unknown to the tourist and unsought by him, doubtless much to the possessor's peaceful enjoyment of his own. We found no mention of this interesting old house in our guide-book after most diligent search therein, but knowing the various vagaries of these productions this fact did not much astonish us; indeed, had we really discovered a place so remote from the ordinary beaten paths of travel described there, we should certainly have been somewhat surprised.

On reaching the hall we made bold to ring the bell at the entrance gateway. (One could not use the term 'front-door' in speaking of such a place—it would take all the poetry at once away; though, as a stern matter of fact, I believe it was such a door that we went to.) We rung on the slender hope that perchance we might be permitted to view the interior. It was the housekeeper who answered our summons, and, upon making known our desire, very politely, yet very positively, refused us, stating that no stranger was allowed admission. Her manner showed that she was much puzzled at our even dreaming to ask such an unheard-of thing, which proved to us plainer than anything else that

we had at last discovered a favoured land where the genus tripper has not yet appeared.

Near to Faulkbourne Hall in the grounds are some remarkably fine cedars, alone worth a long journey to see. One of these trees, I think I may safely say, is amongst the largest, if it is not itself actually the largest in the kingdom. When we were there it measured twenty-five feet in circumference at about a foot from the ground. How old it is, who can say ?

Returning to Witham we ordered the horses to, and were soon again on our way. Having been told by an antiquarian friend that there was a remarkably fine old tower-house at Layer Marney, a scattered hamlet in an almost *terra incognita* between Witham and Colchester, we looked up the name of the place on our map, and endeavoured to make out our route thither, which, however, we were not very successful in doing, for the Essex cross-country by-ways are almost as puzzling as Hampton Court maze, so we determined to take our course by the compass, selecting those roads that appeared most likely to lead in the direction we desired, trusting to arrive some time during the day at Layer Marney.

It was pleasant on that hot summer day to exchange the dusty highway for the tree-shaded and grass-bordered country lanes, narrow though they were and given to wind about in a most perplexing and annoying manner. Writing of country by-ways, I wonder why it is that Devonshire is so famed above all other parts for the length, narrowness, and

endless twistings and turnings of its lanes. There are other counties with lanes quite as narrow, as winding, and as long. I almost think that in this matter Essex can hold her own with ease, and I feel as sure as I am of anything that some of the Sussex by-ways could do even more — could give the Devonshire lanes long odds and a beating; and I ought to know, for I have both walked and driven over the greater portion of both counties.

Passing by an old mill close to a cool stillly sheet of water, whose picturesque water-wheel has, alas! given way to the hidden turbine, we presently came to Little Braxted Church, said to be one of the smallest places of worship in Essex, its total length from east to west being barely forty-five feet; and when from this the chancel is taken away and the space at the other end where baulks of timber spring up in a strange manner from the floor to the roof to support the tiny bell turret, there is not room left for a large congregation, as may be imagined.

Little Braxted Church is a very ancient and an exceedingly quaint Norman building. It is chiefly constructed of stone rubble, and has a rounded chancel (apsidal is, I believe, the correct architectural term); both chancel and nave are under one roof. One of the original Norman windows is curiously small and deeply set, being only a few inches wide, but the chief interest of this ancient edifice lies in its interior. Upon entering the church one is struck by the richness of the decorated walls, every inch of which is painted with frescoes, scroll-work, or other ornamentation, and along the beams

are texts in English and inscriptions in Latin. It is, indeed, a gem of a church, and one is the more charmed with the rare beauty of the interior by the contrast with its rough, almost rude, exterior. It takes the stranger wholly unawares, and the suddenness of the surprise enhances the effect. It is not often, alas! that the wanderer of to-day is delightfully surprised by the internal beauty of a remote country church, the more especially when situated like this in a poor agricultural district, where one generally expects whitewash and neglect—which expectation is seldom disappointed.

The rector of Little Braxted is manifestly, and very justly, proud of his small and beautiful church. The great interest he takes in it is shown in a somewhat curious little book that he has written for the benefit of his parishioners, which he calls 'The Story of the Church.' In his book the rector relates much of the church's past history, which he states was first erected about the year 1120, so that this tiny fane is over seven long centuries old. 'Most of the country then,' he writes, 'was covered with thick woods or wild heath, and as for the roads, oh! what hard work it was to drag the stones over them to build this church! Some of the stones came by ship to Maldon and some by land, and the dark brown stones you see here and there in the walls were gathered from Tiptree Heath. When they had cleared the ground the builders came down on St. Nicholas' morning (December 6) and put two poles in a line so that they stood just straight with the sun as it rose over the hill, and on that line they

made the middle aisle. That is the reason the chancel points so much to the south instead of lying due east; and if you come to church next St. Nicholas' Day, just as the service begins at eight o'clock, you will see the sun shining straight in at the east window over the altar.'

After following the history of the church down to the present century the rector goes on to relate, in his easy colloquial manner, the part he took in making the once plain structure beautiful. 'In 1856, when I was a boy,' he says, 'learning my Latin grammar, and knowing nothing about Little Braxted (and not much about anything), the rector here set to work to restore this church; he collected and spent nearly 500*l.* and made the whole church sound, strong, and clean. But when I came here I thought, Why should it only be *clean*? Why not *beautiful*?—and good friends helped me: friends who never saw this place, but who love the House of God wherever it is. And so many more hundreds of pounds have been spent, and the little window' (the quaintly tiny Norman one that I have already mentioned) 'that looks down on the chancel would not complain now, as it used to do, that "This House lieth desolate." First, then, teach your children, and everyone you come across in the world, that God's House ought to be the finest house and the most beautiful house in the parish.'

Besides the stories told in frescoes, and besides the many texts in curious lettering, making the walls truly 'sermons in stones,' there are numerous Latin inscriptions, some painted strangely in long and

short characters, and others with puzzling dots under certain letters. The reason of this curious proceeding much perplexed us. It was evidently not for ornamentation. Manifestly, we thought, there is more here than at first meets the eye, but the rector's little book solved the mystery, of which anon. Let me transcribe here two of these inscriptions, which suggested to us the idea of an enigma such as one comes upon in puzzle books. Here, then, are two—one with the long and short characters seemingly given in a most purposeless manner, the other with the dots under various letters without any apparent motive or order :—

LeX eCCe Vera fVLsIt JesV LVCe :  
 reX nUnC peCCata soLVIt nostra CrUCe :  
 greX repasCatUr Christo sUo DUCe :

The other that I have selected runs as follows :

Occupet Salus ovilis muros et portas ejus laudatio.  
 ... ..

The first of these inscriptions the rector renders in English thus :

Here finds the law in Jesus' light true reading,  
 Now by His Cross our King the pardon needing  
 Gives, that the flock may on their Chief be feeding.

which last line does not seem to me to be good Protestant doctrine.

Now to return once more to the rector's little work (shall I call it a guide-book to the church ?), he goes on to say, ' But perhaps people will come and look about and ask " What does *this* mean ?" and " What is *that* for ?" ' (Very naturally ; indeed these very pertinent questions suggested themselves to us).



But let the rector explain in his own peculiar way; 'I will tell you what they mean,' he says, 'and you can tell people when they really want to *learn*; not silly people who come to find fault,—you had best let them go about their own business, if they have any.

'Let us come in at the porch door. It is always open; the church is *your* house as well as God's, and you may go in whenever you like to look at it; or better still to kneel down and say your prayers; I wish you would.'

After explaining many things (even two of the pillars it would appear have their own names, the one Boaz and the other Jachin, 'after the names of the two pillars in the first temple of God'), we come to the puzzling inscriptions. Again let the rector speak for himself: 'But you will say, "Why put these queer-looking texts about with their long and short letters and dots? I will tell you. Suppose a traveler from a foreign country were to come now, or a thousand years hence, if he were to look at those texts he would understand them, because Latin is a language that all learned people know, and it never changes; and the long letters and the letters with dots would tell anyone the date that the things were put into the church, just as the date of the year is made up of letters. I have reckoned up one of these texts for you, just to show what I mean. The others you can puzzle out for yourselves some time when you are waiting in church, but not in the middle of the sermon, please;" which is a wise reservation.

Now we come to the explanation of these curi-

ously written texts and inscriptions. It would seem in the one case that the long letters, and in the other that those marked by the dots beneath, are to be considered as Roman numerals, and by adding up the total sum of these you obtain the date of the year when the text was painted on the wall, though of course it takes some little time and trouble to obtain this important information. A simpler method of conveying the desired knowledge (one moreover that all could understand), it appeared to us in our simplicity, would be to have just added the date in plain figures after the texts; but perchance there is some hidden virtue in complication that we do not comprehend.

It will be seen that these texts are written for 'learned people' who may come to see the church in the present day or in 'a thousand years hence,' not for the primitive agricultural folk, who, unless I greatly mistake, constitute the main portion, if not the whole of the small, congregation; which careful consideration for strangers seems rather hard upon the worshippers for whom the church is chiefly intended. And for all this consideration I do not feel so very sure that the coming traveller (who, by the way, must know Latin) will ever guess the hidden meaning of the curious long letters and the strange dots beneath others. Even with the aid of the worthy rector's lucid explanation, some care and time is required to arrive at a result. Let us take as an example one of the under-dotted texts done in Latin that I have already given. In this we find the following letters marked in the order in which they

come : C C U (the U counts as V or 5) ; then follow L U V I L I M U J (J for I or 1) ; then U L U D I. Now to add these up : M of course represents 1000, D 500, the two C's are equal to 200, the three L's make together 150, the five U's and the solitary V make another 30, the four I's count 4. Now, if you will trouble to add all these together you will arrive at 1884, or, if you prefer, you may take my word for it, for I have done the little sum, and a very tedious and complicated way it is of affording information about a trifling matter, but perhaps puzzling out these dates may keep the congregation entertained when the sermon is dull or over long, though for that purpose they were never intended.

There is much other interesting and peculiar information to be gleaned from this little work : as to why the altar is white sometimes, at others red, again purple for a change, and still again green 'when nothing particular is happening' ! But I fear, kind reader, that I have already kept you too long in Little Braxted church : let us get out into the open air ; the blue sky and green trees are more delightful to look upon than any painted walls ; let us remount the phaeton which awaits us at the corner of the ancient churchyard, and proceed with our pleasant pilgrimage.

The country now became both hilly and well wooded, and, gaining a height, we had a glorious prospect over a vast extent of country, one of those scenic surprises reserved for the wanderer by road. At Great Braxted, the next village we came to (as pretty a rural hamlet as one may meet on a day's drive), we

noticed the name over the public-house of Wybrew, Brewer. It was rather strange the number of names, appropriate and the reverse to the callings of their possessors, we observed at the various villages and towns we passed through. In one place we noticed that a certain Bywell was an auctioneer, at another Drinkwater was a wine merchant, Deadmon did duty elsewhere as an undertaker ; a wayside public-house, with the sign of The Victory, was kept by one H. Nelson, and another, The Traveller's Rest, by I. Boniface.

Just as we were driving out of Great Braxted an amusing little incident took place. An enraged turkey-cock (though how we had enraged him I know not, unless it were that he objected to strangers) placed himself noisily and defiantly, with feathers outspread, in the middle of the road, and actually attempted to dispute the right of way with us ; he was even so far successful that he caused the horses to shy badly, which was mischief enough for a bird to make.

Passing through a wild and thinly-peopled country we came to Tiptree Heath, famous in the olden days for its highwaymen, and in more recent times for Mr. Mechi's model farm and his experiments in scientific agriculture. Both now are things of the past.

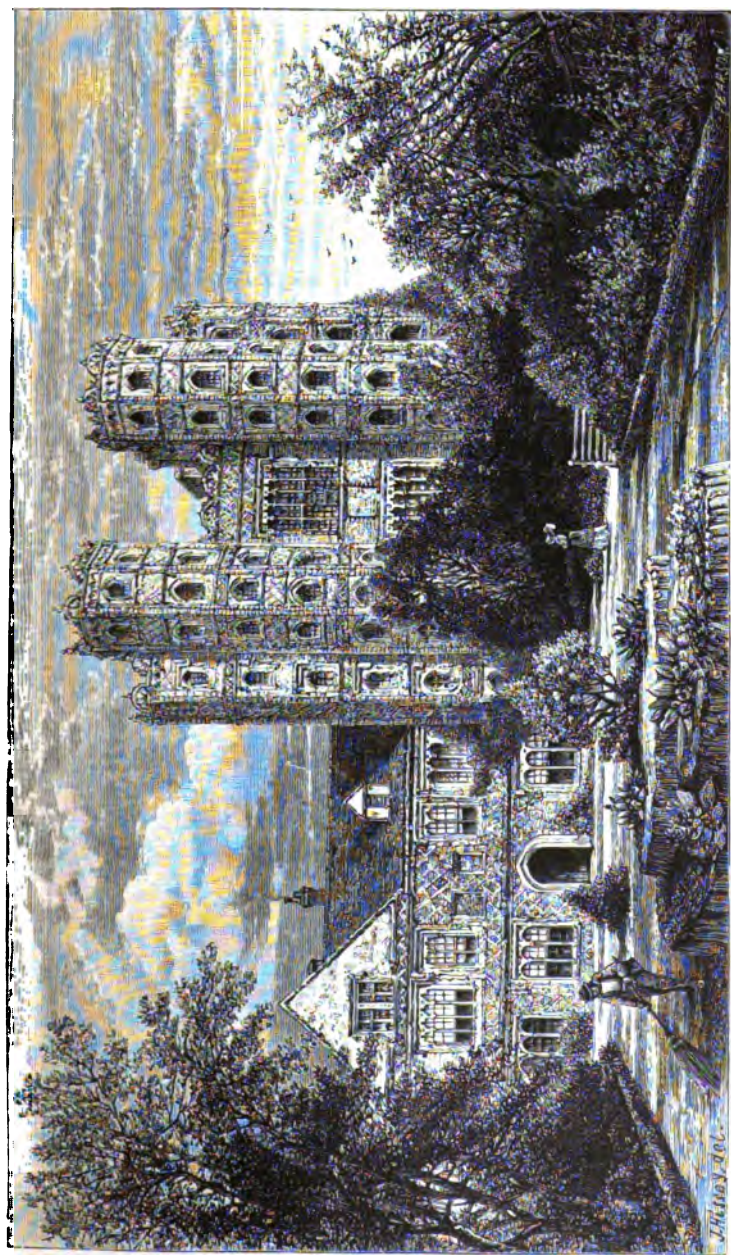
Tiptree Heath was formerly an extensive wild woodland, broken here and there with heather wastes ; indeed in early times it was a portion of the great Forest of Essex that extended from this part, and from miles beyond, to ancient London. The heath is now mostly enclosed and cultivated, it has

therefore lost nearly all of its ancient wildness and rough beauty ; wayward Nature has been tamed, hedged in, made more profitable but less pleasing in a picturesque sense.

In the days before railways this sparsely-inhabited district was the favourite ground of numerous highwaymen, Dick Turpin, of schoolboy fame, amongst the number. It is recorded of this renowned knight of the road that upon one occasion he overtook a gentleman travelling alone along one of the sequestered highways here. Dick Turpin bade the traveller good-day and asked permission to join him for company and as a better protection against robbers. (Oh, Mr. Turpin !) To this apparently innocent request the stranger readily consented, for he confessed that he too had some fear as to the safety of travelling all alone. It would seem that upon this occasion, contrary to his general habit, Turpin's object was not so much robbery as to learn if by chance the stranger were able to inform him whether the reports spread about were true, that a troop of dragoons had been ordered to scour the country after him. Whether Master Turpin gained the desired information or not I cannot say, but tradition has it that the two strangers as they rode along became quite confidential to each other ; Turpin indeed by his artless manner had so won over his companion that he (the said companion) confided to Dick the precautions that he had taken against being robbed on the way. ' You see,' said he innocently, ' I have had the heels of my boots hollowed out and carry my gold coin tightly packed

there. It is perfectly safe ; no one would ever dream of looking in such an unlikely place for it. Capital idea—eh !’ ‘Excellent,’ replied Turpin, who immediately proceeded to improve the occasion, and, to the utter astonishment and chagrin of his fellow traveller, quietly drew forth his pistol and presented it with a bow and a demand that the money so carefully hidden in the heels of the boots should be handed over to him. The highwayman is all very well in a romance, but in reality he was a most undesirable being ; his life was in his hands ; if he was caught there was the gibbet for him, and if a traveller resisted being robbed the inducement to settle him at once was great, for the highwayman was no worse off. This is the reverse of the medal of ‘the good old times,’ when it is on record that a shipwrecked traveller, after landing in safety on an unknown shore, upon discovering a gibbet with a man hanging in chains therefrom, rejoiced at the sight, for then he knew that he had been cast away in a civilised country !

The country opened out as we proceeded, and at last we caught a sight of the ancient tower of Laver Marney Hall. Our map failed us here, but after many windings and twistings, and getting more than once lost in the narrow lanes, we did manage to reach the old mansion. The first near glance at this delighted us, for it was manifest that we had come upon a magnificent and little known specimen of architecture of the bygone days when men built for themselves grand habitations,—the lordly few of the land, that is.



LAYER MARNEY TOWER, ESSEX





Layer Marney Hall—or tower gateway, I should more correctly say, for it would appear that the Hall in its entirety was never completed—is an excellent and most noteworthy example, as far as it goes, of an English nobleman's mansion of the period. It was built about the year 1506, when the feudal stronghold and the moated manor house were gradually giving way to the more peaceful and desirable domestic habitation, when security was less needed and comfort therefore could be better considered; a building capable of being defended upon an emergency, sufficiently strong to resist a sudden attack, but for all more of a stately home than a fortified place.

The general idea of this grand sixteenth-century gateway, of about eighty feet in height, with its flanking towers of eight stories, will be better realised from the illustration of it that I have given than from pages of printed description. It is interesting to note that, though the general outlines of a feudal fortified gateway and approach are retained, loopholes have given place to small windows, and in the wall space between the flanking towers are even large windows looking outwards; in the castle proper these always looked inwards towards the courtyard, the external walls were only pierced by narrow slits for the defending archers. Here we find the builder gradually freeing himself from past forms, and accommodating himself to the growing needs of the times; Layer Marney tower is a chapter of our history in bricks and mortar, as plain to him who can read it as any printed page. Had

the fates ordained otherwise, and this grand old hall been situated anywhere near the beaten track of travellers, it would certainly be as tourist-besieged, as much photographed, painted, and written about as other more famed though not more interesting old homes. Fortunately Layer Marney has not suffered the indignity of being turned into a sort of peep-show, with crowds of sight-seers at so much a head, personally conducted by a guide with his ready-made stories to suit all tastes. It was owing to the courtesy of its present owner and occupier that we were permitted to see the whole of this truly magnificent building ; he not only showed us over and gave us all the information in his power, but of his good nature also offered us refreshment, and this was by no means a single instance of the kindness and hospitality we met with from total strangers.

Travelling by road is a very different thing from travelling by rail. Who ever makes friends travelling by train ? Yet on our most enjoyable outing we made many, indeed it seemed to us that ' wherever we met a stranger, there we left a friend.' I know not why it should be, but so it is, railways appear to freeze the friendliness out of people. I have travelled by train from London to Edinburgh and never spoken to one of my fellow travellers, or they to me : we might all have been the greatest enemies ; by road we chatted with every one we met, and because of this our journey was full of interest and life seemed ever so much brighter. The kindness we met with from all we came across impressed us much ; several total strangers we came upon actually

put themselves considerably out of the way to show us places and things of interest that we should not have seen otherwise. Some of these strangers were gentlemen and ladies to whom we could only express our warmest thanks, others were small shopkeepers, some were labouring men. But the latter did it not for love of gain, as was proved in more than one instance by our 'tip' being politely but firmly refused. By the way, when on the rail I cannot call to recollection a single case of either guard or porter refusing a gratuity for any little service rendered, even though it were against the rules of the company and subjected them according to those rules to 'instant dismissal'! As Seneca says, 'He who would make his journey delightful, must first make himself delightful,' so we found that civility invariably begot civility and often secured us substantial benefits besides; when on a driving-tour the world always seems to us a very happy and bright place to live in, whatever it may be at other times. 'Deed, sir,' said a farm-labourer to us one day when we offered him a trifle for going far out of his road, doubtless after a hard day's work, to show us the way to a very interesting old church; 'deed, sir, I'm right glad to show such a civil-spoken gentleman the way. I didn't do it to be paid, 'deed I didn't;' and do what we could he would not accept anything for the trouble he had taken on our behalf, he replied that 'he was main proud that he had been of any service to us.' We found out, however, that he had some little ones at home, and so we managed with some diplomacy to induce him to accept a shilling for the children.

But I have been sadly digressing ; it was the unexpected kindness shown to us by the owner of Layer Marney Hall that caused me to wander away so from the matter in hand. It would be interesting, did space permit, to trace back the history of the Marney family, who seem suddenly to have become famous and almost as suddenly to have died out. According to the 'Proceedings of the Essex Archæological Society,' vol. iii., Henry Lord Marney, to whom we owe this grand gateway (grand, though merely a portion of the entire scheme of what was manifestly intended to have been a most stately mansion), Henry Lord Marney then, we learn from the authority above quoted, 'numerous and splendid as were the honours which he acquired, started in life as plain Henry Marney, Esq.,' and belonged to a class described by Henry VIII. as 'scant well-borne gentlemen, of no great lands.' He was created a baron by title of Lord Marney, a Knight of the Garter, Lord Privy Seal, and Captain of the Body Guard. The patent of nobility he only enjoyed for a year, and his son John succeeded to his title and property, who also died the year following his father's decease, leaving no issue, and so this family, so suddenly brought into prominence, became extinct.

Had Lord [John] Marney lived, probably Layer Marney Hall would have been completed in all its intended magnificence, and it would then, there is little room to doubt, have compared in stateliness with the most splendid mansions of the kingdom. The gateway alone is of great interest, not merely

on account of its architectural grandeur and beauty, but because of the originality of its design and the unusual materials (for the period) employed in its erection. The structure is of bricks, which are peculiarly small, with terra-cotta mouldings. This is one of the earliest, if not indeed the very earliest specimen of the revival of brickwork in any building of consequence since the time of the Romans, but the chief feature of the structure is, of course, the terra-cotta adornments, and it is curious to note that the clay from which these are made is not to be found in the neighbourhood. Lord Marney is said to have imported Italian workmen especially to make this terra-cotta, which proceeding on his part may account for the classic details in the ornamentation, though the quaint dolphins at the top of the flanking towers scarcely seem to belong to this formal style. But though no rigid or particular style has been adhered to, the general effect of the gateway is excellent; manifestly the architect, by his bold departure from previous forms of building, was left a free hand and wisely decided to be original, not only in his general design and ornamentation, but, as before noticed, even in the materials employed.

This mansion of Layer Marney, it is evident, was to have been a notable building, a monument to the greatness of the family. Here we have no slavish copy of preceding work, but something fresh and suitable to the changed needs of the time, a building expressing great individuality, yet happily free from eccentricity, effective without any sugges-

tion of straining after effect, and, above all things, dignified : an edifice that tells of the genius of its designer and the splendour of the age.

With the kind permission of the owner we mounted up numerous steps to the top of the tower. From this we had a glorious bird's-eye view : near at hand we looked down upon the tallest trees, and far away to the south we caught sight of the silvery gleam of the Blackwater River. Long we rested on that time-worn tower, for we felt in a lazy mood that day, drinking in the beauty of the scene. We gazed upon a wild wooded country stretching from us long leagues to river and distant sea ; the landscape that we looked upon is much the same that the lordly builder of this stately tower must have seen when he came here, as doubtless he often did ; the hoary old church, almost directly beneath us, stands still as it did of yore, within whose hallowed walls, under stately altar-tombs, the once proud possessors of this splendid home now sleep their last long sleep. It would be difficult to find in all England a spot more suggestive of remoteness than Layer Marney ; it is the very embodiment of quiet and peace—dulness, if you will—far removed as it is from the vulgar hurry and rush of the outer world. Henry, Lord Marney, could he rise from his cold marble tomb, might look well around him, and from all that he could gather here, he would imagine in all probability that the world, or this corner of England at least, had changed little in all the fateful centuries that he had been sleeping in his grand tomb, for here no railway is in sight, no sound of

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steam whistle frets the stilly country air, no telegraph wires stretch across the land, the roads are possibly no worse and no better than they were three centuries ago. Yes, Lord Marney might wake from his long sleep, and, from all he could tell from the surroundings of his former stately mansion, find the world apparently but little changed ; he might think how well his building had lasted and wish to complete it, and perhaps he might wish that his tomb had been better cared for.

## CHAPTER V.

Layer Marney Church—Old Altar-tombs—An Ancient Will—An English Earthquake—Rooms once occupied by Famous People—An Historic Farmhouse—A Primitive Letter Box—A Ford on the Road—A Ruined Church—An Ancient Coaching Hostellerie—The Old-fashioned Inn—Inn Signs—Relics of the Past—A Country Church with Tenth-Century Frescoes—Walls six yards thick!—St. Botolph's Priory—A Curious Church Tower.

THE grey old time-hallowed church which stands under the shadow of the grand Layer Marney tower, and which is in truth dwarfed by the majesty and greatness of the latter, is of considerable interest on account of the Marney chapel and the elaborate altar-tombs it contains to that once famous family. It was our good fortune by happy chance to be conducted over this ancient church by the rector of the parish, who kindly gave us every information in his power as to the past history of the building and particulars as to the fine monuments it contains. Our general fate when inspecting such edifices is to be shown round by the clerk, whom, whatever his other desirable qualifications, we have found seldom to take much interest in the office of guide, and who gives you what little information he may in a parrot-like fashion wearisome to listen to, or else does not seem to know anything at all, and hurries you along past objects of interest, careless whether you observe



them or no, and apparently chiefly intent upon backsheesh. But for all there are clerks and clerks.

The tower of Layer Marney church is a massive one of brick, and the vestry is built out in imitation of the porch, a curious and unusual arrangement. The first altar-tomb that we inspected was the earliest in date, being to Sir William Marney, who died in 1414. This, the rector told us, formerly stood in the middle of the chancel, but had been removed some time ago to where it now is. The effigy is carefully carved in alabaster and represents the knight clad in full armour with jewelled belt; the helmet is smooth with chain mail beneath, and on the breastplate is a lion rampant.

O mortall folk ! you may behold and se  
How I lye here, sometyme a myghty knyght ;  
The end of joy and all prosperite  
Is dethe at last through his course and myght ;  
After the day there cometh the derke night,  
For though the day be never so longe,  
At last the bells ringeth to evensong.

Next we came to the beautiful canopied tomb of Henry, Lord Marney, he who built the grand gateway and planned the stately home which was never completed. My Lord Marney is represented in partial armour, rings are shown on his hands, and spurs on his sollerets or steel shoes; the effigy is in strong contrast to the one of alabaster, being of black marble. The panels and terra-cotta work of the canopy are similar in colour and design to the enrichments of the Marney gate-tower, proving beyond reasonable doubt that the same craftsman had been employed to do both.

But by far the most interesting tomb of the three is the one to the memory of John Lord Marney, the last of the Marneys of the male line. This was erected in strict accordance with the instructions that he made in his will, of which prolix document I quote a portion here with its curious old-time spelling. After ordering that his tomb 'should be wrought in every condition' as his father's, he goes on to direct that 'Round about my said Tumble I will there be made a grate of waynscott, and at every corner of the same grate a principall pyller w<sup>t</sup> a white leopard upon the top thereof, and upon which Tumble I woll have an Image for myself of the same stone that my said Tumble like unto my said father's tumble shalbe made, yf it may be gotten, or ells of freestone, my said Image lying upon the mids thereof porteryd w<sup>t</sup> my cote armor, with my helme and creste at the hede and a white leopard at the feet, and on either side of my said Image I will myn executors ley oon Image of brasse for every of my two wyves . . . bothe the said Images to be pykturyd with their cote armors, and at the west ende of the said Tumble I will there be made an awter where I woll have a preest synging for me perpetually after such orden'ces and devices as here in this my present will hereafter I have shewed and declared.' Alas! the 'pyllers w<sup>t</sup> the white leopards upon the tops' that once surrounded this unique tomb have (and it seemed to us without purpose or good reason) been removed and placed by the sides of some common-place pews in the chancel, where, of course,

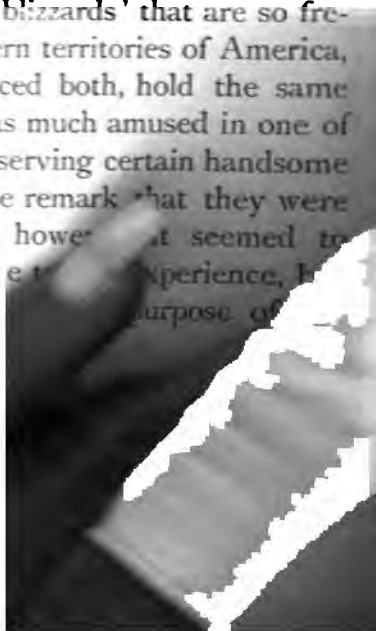
they are meaningless. Indeed, before we were acquainted with the history of the removal of these ornamental fluted pillars, each surmounted with its heraldic leopard (which leopards, by the way, look exceedingly like lions), we asked ourselves whatever they could be intended for, so purposeless did they seem in their present wrongful position. Why this change? What a pity it is that we cannot leave even the memorials of our ancestors to our descendants in their integrity without wilfully destroying their original harmony and intention!

The altar still fortunately remains at the west end of this ancient monumental tomb where the priest was to pray for the soul of Lord [John] Marney continually. But where is the priest? Well, perhaps the soul of the worthy warrior and statesman rests none the less peacefully though the altar is desecrated and forsaken, and there is no priest there praying perpetually.

The Marney chapel has been much injured in times past by having the lead covering of its roof stripped off by the churchwardens in the stormy days of the struggle between the King and the Commonwealth, the churchwardens in question being of the opinion that the lead would be doing better service employed as bullets to oppose the King's forces than by performing its original intention of keeping the rain out of the chapel. The notable (for England, that is) earthquake that visited these parts on the 22nd of April, 1884, seems to have had its centre here, and to have damaged not only the massive walls of the church of Layer Marney but

those of the great tower gateway as well. In the country too, as we drove along, we noticed every here and there sundry cracks in buildings and fissures in certain walls, which, we were informed, had been caused by the shock. By the damage done to different buildings it is, or was, possible to trace the course of the earth-wave: fortunately it did not pass through any large town, or it would have wrought havoc with some of the 'jerry' builders' flimsy erections, which they dignify by the title of desirable residences. The said cracks and fissures made in massive and mightily built walls, that look as though they would last for all time, prove how severe this shock was. Earthquakes are not pleasant things, though, when travelling in California, that land of earthquakes, more than one inhabitant of that State told me that they would infinitely rather experience an ordinary earthquake than one of the terrible thunderstorms or 'blizzards' that are so frequent in some of the western territories of America, and I, who have experienced both, hold the same opinion. By the way, I was much amused in one of the Californian towns on observing certain handsome structures for sale with the remark that they were 'earthquake proof,' which, however, it seemed to me, was a matter open to the test of experience, but doubtless the assurance was given for the purpose of an ingenious and enterprising

The rector of  
us, strange war  
told us before  
bourhood.



be a corruption of Duke's House, though why it should have been called the Duke's—if it ever was—we were unable to find out. However, at this old place, he said, according to tradition, Queen Elizabeth once rested overnight during one of her numerous progresses, and the room in which she slept was shown; I am afraid that country traditions have a great deal to answer for. However, as it did not take us much out of our way to visit the house, we determined to go there. I once knew a gentleman who possessed an ancient hall which he purchased with a very doubtful tradition of some great personage having slept in one of its ghostly-looking chambers (the very gloomiest and most haunted-looking one, of course). He found, however, that the tradition was a serious drawback to the peaceful enjoyment of his property, as tourists were induced by mention of it in guide-books to call and beg permission to see the room in which this famous personage had slept. The gentleman in question was good-nature itself; nevertheless his family strongly objected to the continual coming of strangers, and his only compromise was to allow them to stay in the garden.

show duty. Of course I cannot defend the morality of this arrangement, though, as there is little question but that the original tradition was without the slightest foundation in fact, the change of place does not seem to matter so very much. I merely mention the circumstance as showing how country traditions are not to be implicitly relied upon. To quote another case in point, of which I have already made mention in a previous work, and in this instance the 'St. James's Gazette' is my authority:—'The room shown in Ecclefechan as the one where Carlyle first saw the light, and in which Americans shut their eyes to dream of his baby-cot, is merely so exhibited by the present inhabitants of the house to suit their own convenience! The other room, the real birth-place, is full of odds and ends, and too small besides to make a good show-room. So the larger room has been promoted!'

We had not much difficulty in finding the Tuke's House, but we were hardly prepared to find such an insignificant building as it proved to be; quite an ordinary farmhouse, it did not even look as though it might have 'seen better times.' We were fortunate in finding the owner there, who kindly did duty as showman. The chamber in which Queen Elizabeth is said to have slept, though the best in the house, is in no way remarkable, except for a rather pretty window; the ceiling is low, and the room not large. Let into the leaded panes of this window is a curious bit of stained glass, with the Tudor rose in the centre surmounted by a crown; on one side of this device is the capital letter E, and on

the other a capital R. These two letters, our guide informed us, stood for 'Elizabeth Regina'—and we could not say otherwise. It is quite possible that this precious bit of stained glass, which is manifestly old, may be of the date of Elizabeth; it is also just possible that the two capital letters stand for what we were told they did, and it may be some former occupier of this old house got possession of the glass and had it placed in the window, but more than this we were not prepared to grant. Without other confirmative evidence, of which there appears to be none, the existence of such a bit of stained glass seems to be hardly sufficient proof upon which to found such a tradition. The owner also told us that there was a further tradition of a secret passage between the house and Layer Marney Hall, but such stories of secret passages abound in the neighbourhood of old mansions, and we accepted it for what it was worth. Our guide also stated that he had been told that Queen Elizabeth travelled about with a supply of these stained glass devices, and that it was a matter of etiquette with her to leave one behind wherever she visited, to be placed in the window of the room in which she slept as a memento of her stay. All of which was news to us, and I dare say is news to my readers. Travellers by road in out-of-the-way places gather many strange facts—or fictions.

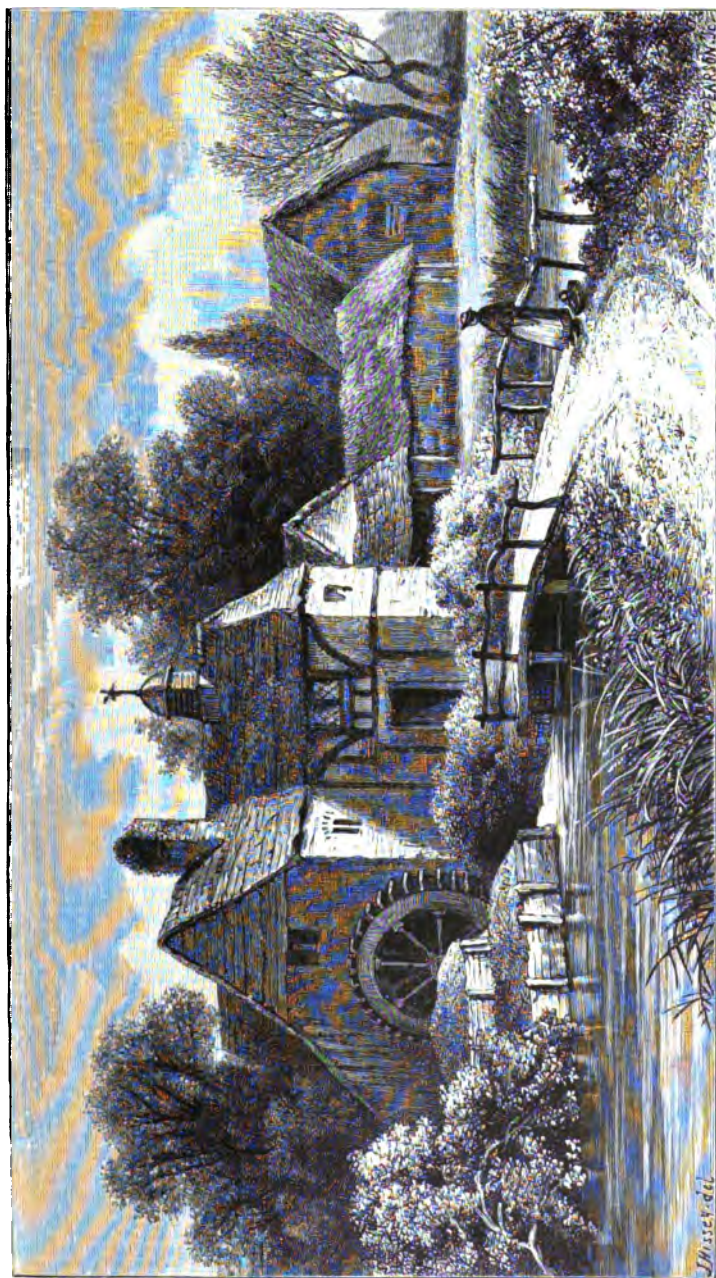
As we left Layer Marney, at one place by the way we noticed a primitive letter-box constructed of wood and simply nailed to a tree. In this we presumed the postman left letters for some distant

house out of his beat. It speaks well for the honesty of the rural folks hereabouts that this can be done in safety.

Our road now, on to Colchester, where we intended to spend the night, proved to be very beautiful; first by shady woods it led us, then it took us through a pleasant pastoral land, and as we drove along the sweet scent of clover and the characteristic odour of the gorse were wafted to us on the freshening breeze. About half way on our stage we came to a short though (for Essex) steep descent; at the bottom of this we had to ford a stream, a little wooden bridge by the side being provided for the wayfarer on foot. The tiny ford and rustic bridge, with its background of many-tinted waving woods, made as pretty a picture as the eye of an artist could desire.

Mounting to the top of the hill on the other side we came to the little hamlet of Stanway, so called from the old paved Roman road or Stone-way which passed through this part, leading to Colchester. Here we were surprised by finding a ruined church, all ivy-grown, with brambles, docks, and weeds flourishing around its deserted and broken walls. As far as I can remember, this was the first ruined church that we had come upon during our many drives over the larger portion of Great Britain, and we were so struck by the strange sight that, though heavy threatening clouds were gathering around, and the distant rumble of thunder came to us now and again, we could not resist, even at the risk of getting a drenching, the temptation to stop and





AN OLD ESSEX MILL



make a hurried sketch of it. But alas! before our journey was over we found that a church in ruins thus was no uncommon spectacle in Eastern England, for we saw several in this condition. This desolated church at Stanway we afterwards learnt (built in the reign of Edward I.) was laid waste during the civil wars, and as at Layer Marney so here, the lead was stripped off the roof to be melted into bullets for the Parliamentary troops, the timber being used as fuel to melt the lead.

Arriving at the ancient and historic town of Colchester we put up at the Cups, which inn, by an inscription on the arched entrance, we learnt was 'Built 1572' and 'Rebuilt 1886,' so that though the name of this noted hostelry is old, its history is now the only thing ancient about it. We had been recommended here by the rector of Layer Marney, so we drove up at once to the Cups, and therefore it was that on this occasion we failed to observe our usual mode of procedure of driving round about a fresh town and selecting our inn for ourselves. We were made most comfortable at the Cups, and though, were I ever so exacting (which I am not), I could find no possible fault with our lodging or entertainment, not forgetting our horses' interest, at this most excellent hotel, still for all, had we according to our wont first taken a tour of inspection, I have little doubt but that we should have elected to spend the night beneath the sign of the Red Lion. A most comfortable-looking and charmingly picturesque old half-timbered hostelry this, a picture in itself more pleasing than many a painting, with its carved wood

front, its projecting upper story, and its grand red-tiled roof. Upon the spandrel on one side of the spacious doorway of this delightful old-world hostel is a sculptured representation of St. George with the time-honoured lance, on the other the famous dragon is given. We were told that this ancient house was built in the year 1412, and a grand old inn it is—you might travel far before coming upon such another; let us hope that it will long be spared to us.

'Tis a finely-toned, picturesque, sunshiny place,  
Recalling a dozen old stories,  
With a rare British, good-natured, ruddy-toned face,  
Suggesting old wines and old Tories.  
Ah! many a magnum of rare crusted port,  
Of vintage no one could cry fie on,  
Has been drunk by good men of the old-fashioned sort  
At the sign of the old Red Lion.

The old-fashioned English inn, not for a moment to be confounded with its degenerate successor the modern hotel, which latter, be it grand or mean—oftentimes, alas! an unhappy combination of both these qualities—is in my experience, with all its plate glass, glare, glitter, and unrest, generally as comfortless as it is pretentious, and always more or less expensive—the old-fashioned inn for which England was once so deservedly famous, as it existed in the palmy days of the coaching age, was as near an approach to an ideal hostelry as perhaps the world will ever see. Picturesque without, as a rule, were these old-time hostels, and abounding with comfort within; utility and a care for convenience rather than uniformity guided the bygone builders in devising these

structures. If in a few cases during the later days of road travel some of these old inns were plain externally, they were always substantially constructed, and however large they might be, they ever possessed an inviting and hospitable look, a look that the designer of a modern hotel, even though he may strive for it, lamentably fails to convey. It is strange how an inanimate building can be made thus plainly to suggest a welcome, for there is an individuality, a character in buildings as well as in men, an outward expression that invites us or the reverse. Architecture has its own language; an ample porch or wide doorway speaks a welcome, a narrow entrance repels the visitor. In the same way plain walls with narrow windows suggest austerity and gloom; a cottage may be built grandly and a nobleman's mansion meanly.

These old coaching inns were entered, and, where they yet exist, still are entered, by a wide archway leading to an ample courtyard. Sheltered beneath this archway the weary traveller could descend at his leisure undisturbed by the bustle and traffic of the street, protected as well from the winter rain as the heat of the summer sun. This is just one of those small things little thought of now, one of those unconsidered trifles, that add greatly to the comfort of the arriving or departing guest.

Then the characteristic signs of these ancient hostels, what a pleasing and interesting feature they were, oftentimes of quaint design, and as an almost invariable rule supported by scrolled ironwork skilfully wrought! The landlords of those days were

proud of these distinguishing features of their houses, and generally being men of substance and prosperous withal, they were not to be outdone by their rivals in such a matter. Large sums were expended upon the production of these signs, and in special cases artists of repute were employed to devise and paint them. As much as 50*l.* was by no means an out-of-the-way sum for the owner of a thriving coaching inn to give for the painting of his sign, and not unfrequently much larger sums were devoted to the purpose: indeed it is on record that the once far-famed inn of Scole in Norfolk (the most renowned and popular hostel in the county of the period) possessed an elaborate sign that was erected there in 1655 at a cost of over 1,000*l.*; a truly vast sum, bearing in mind the relative value of money then and now. Unfortunately, in these days an artist of repute would hardly condescend to paint an inn sign; still there does exist more than one sign-board I wot of, the work of well-known artists, but the work was done for love and not for gain. Inn signs nowadays are mostly the work of the village painter's prentice hand, rude and spiritless, as is to be expected, when not absolutely an eyesore or a vulgar absurdity; of quaint conceits and cunning devices what can such a one know? he is a workman (and often an unskilled one at that), not an artist. And the crude performance of the rural painter, how pitifully it contrasts with the grand mass of wrought ironwork that upholds it, so charged this latter with the spirit of freedom and enjoyed handicraft; for the iron standards have outlasted the winter storms of unnumbered

years, years that long ago have weathered the old Red Lion or Green Dragon, that erst gave heraldic welcome on the ancient board, out of all recognition.

These past-time inns, the outcome of the picturesque coaching days, when they have not been altered or improved to suit modern requirements, how they delight the eye of the nineteenth-century traveller along the old high roads ! Oh ! the charm of these quaint and comfortable hostels ; when they have been simply maintained, neither restored nor yet allowed to go to decay, wayside pictures they ! Moreover, have such not the added charm of romance ? The flavour of the past seems to linger over them. Standing in one of their rambling courtyards, almost if not quite deserted in this railway-travelling age (or standing in the roadway looking upon their long many-gabled fronts), one can conjure to oneself without a great strain upon the imagination, how the old place must have appeared in the heyday of its prosperity, when the coaches drew up at the great arched doorway, and the change of horses stood there, restlessly awaiting the well-known sound of the horn. There is the boots standing ready with the traveller's luggage who is going on, and for the moment everyone connected with the hostel, from the jovial-looking landlord in his frilled shirt and top-boots (John Bull personified), the very embodiment of good nature and portly prosperity, to the chamber-maid peering over the gallery within, to get a look at what is going on outside, or it may be to exchange love glances with the ruddy-faced

coachman who is friendly with everybody and seems upon excellent terms with himself. But there is no time to be wasted, for is not the Quicksilver Mail the fastest on the road—and the famous mail keeps time to the minute, so that the country folk even set their clocks by it as it passes? The horses are quickly changed, the passenger with his limited allowance of luggage has taken his place, the horn sounds musically, the word is given, the horses spring into their collars, and the coach rattles away and is soon out of both sight and hearing. Then the old inn (not so old then as now by the way) relapses into its usual quiet and restful repose, but only for a time. Presently 'my lord' comes posting along in hot haste Londonward bound; he is not delayed, post-boys booted and spurred, and post-horses harnessed are ever ready; 'Next turn' is shouted, and scarcely has 'my lord' exchanged greetings with 'mine host' before he is again hasting along the smooth and well-kept turnpike road.

The landlords of these old coaching hostelries were of necessity men of property, and held an important position in the travelling world, so they were on familiar, if indeed it would not be more correct to say friendly terms, with the nobles of the land, and from these downward to the simple yeoman or sturdy farmer on his way across country who might patronise or put up at their inns. But the railway has robbed us of the romance as well as of the inconvenience of travel; it has given us speed in exchange for picturesqueness, and the ancient friendliness begotten of prolonged companionship



upon journeys that took days instead of hours to accomplish is a thing of the past. We have not time now to make friends when we travel, hardly time indeed to be civil one to another. We take our seat, read our paper, see little, and know nothing of the country we pass through, and care less ; only impatiently desire to get to our destination as fast as ever steam will carry us, and we would go even faster did we know how. We often rush down from town to some seaside watering-place, and when we get there, after all our hurrying we scarcely know what to do with ourselves, when we might have driven thither by road and have had a pleasant outing, besides the novelty of the unaccustomed mode of travel.

To the antiquary or archæologist Colchester is one of the most interesting towns in the kingdom. It was a Roman colony of the first importance, and many relics of the occupation have been dug up from time to time ; Roman bricks and considerable portions of Roman work still appear in its castle, church towers, town walls, and other buildings. Our first ramble in Colchester was to the museum, appropriately situated in the ancient weather-beaten castle ; this museum contains one of the most interesting collections of antiquities in the country. We were fortunate enough to meet there the curator, who, observing that we were strangers, most kindly offered to show us over the building, which act of courtesy added greatly to the enjoyment and interest of our visit, for with thoughtful consideration he pointed out to us what was best worth seeing in the

unique collection, and as far as he knew explained their purport and history.

The gem of the museum is a sphinx of Roman work, finely carved in stone; this fabulous creature is represented holding beneath her a man's head, hands, and bones, being the remains of the victim that she is supposed to have killed and eaten—the fate of all those who could not guess the riddle she proposed. We also saw here the old Colchester stocks, which appeared to be still in serviceable condition; they were last used, our guide informed us, in 1858, for the punishment of a woman for drunkenness. Even in this day, in some out-of-the-way villages, we have seen similar stocks *in situ*, as well as iron rings in the walls and pillars of old buildings, to which men were tied by their hands and publicly whipped for certain offences in 'the good old days.' A ducking stool we have not come upon—out of a museum.

But what interested us most in the rich collection of rare things—antique vases, lamps, cinerary urns, drinking vessels, celts, etc.—was a leaden coffin, very ancient, but of uncertain date, discovered only shortly before our visit. This coffin had ornamentation upon it, but the extraordinary thing about it was that from the lid and just over where the head of the body presumably would be, a pipe led to the top of the ground. This is the sole instance on record of such a strange arrangement. It is difficult to understand for what reason this pipe was so attached unless for a supply of air, and the first conjecture upon this curious 'find' being dis-

cussed was that some one had been buried alive for torture, and that the pipe leading to the ground above was to prolong the agony by allowing the victim to linger on. But as the leaden coffin was found carefully enclosed in an oaken outer case, and moreover was decorated, it was manifest that all this expense would not have been incurred simply for the purpose of torture ; therefore some more rational explanation awaits discovery. As the mystery remains unsolved, we hazarded a guess that perchance it was the coffin of the wife of a man of note (for the bones enclosed therein proved to be those of a female), who had a great horror of being buried alive, and had expressed a wish for some such arrangement to be made on her interment.

The curator told us that the land upon which the town was built simply abounded in relics of the past ; hardly a foundation was dug but some 'find' of more or less interest was recorded. He himself, when he had nothing else to do, would dig in his garden, relic-hunting ; 'The other morning whilst digging there I unearthed this,' and the curator showed us an old Roman brick with the impression of a dog's foot upon it, evidently made when the material was plastic, in centuries long gone by, but of which the baked brick has handed down faithful record even to this day.

It somehow frequently happens that after you have returned from a tour, be it at home or abroad, you have brought before your knowledge something or some spot of more or less interest, which lay close upon your route, and could have

been easily seen by you had you only been aware of its existence before instead of after the completion of your journey. So it was with us. In the museum we noticed some carefully coloured copies of certain very rare and very curious tenth-century frescoes that adorn the walls of Copford church, and which were discovered as recently as 1884. This ancient church we could readily have inspected without going much out of our way had we only been aware of its very interesting contents. The door of this church till very recently, we also learnt, was covered with a tanned human skin, said to have been that of a robber who was caught in the very act of despoiling the sacred edifice, and who was killed on the spot, and in the rude and ready way of justice in those times was flayed, and his skin attached to the church door as a warning to others.

As we were leaving the museum the curator called our attention to the thickness of the castle walls, which are, according to his authority (we did not measure them), no less than six yards through, the winding staircase by which we ascended being the widest in Great Britain.

We next made our way to the roofless and ruined priory church of St. Botolph. This was formerly one of the finest Norman churches in the kingdom ; the extent of ground the ruin covers and the massive walls thereof testify to its bygone greatness. It was, unfortunately, ruined during the siege of Colchester in the civil wars by the cannon of Fairfax, and is now picturesque rather than grand ; possibly more pleasing to the eye of an

artist thus than when in the full prime of its Norman glory. This old priory church—or rather what remains of it—is notable for the large amount of Roman brick and tile that has been employed in its construction, some of the interlacing round arches being entirely of this tile. In startling contrast to this noble specimen of old Norman work, close by is the truly modern church of St. Botolph, built in the Norman style forsooth, to harmonise with the ruins ; but it is neither massive nor grand—a Norman church with thin walls of white brick, with moulded arches and painted doors !

Colchester is a town that well repays a desultory ramble. You cannot proceed far in it in any direction (or at least we did not) without coming upon some quaintly interesting bit of old-time building ; it may be merely a gable end with curiously carved brackets, or a projecting corner of sculptured timber, or a fanciful conceit in wrought iron. If you delight in such things, take a leisurely stroll about Colchester and you will not be disappointed. Such picturesque odds and ends of building—bits that charm us so in paintings and drawings—are not considered worthy of note by the general run of guide-book writers, so that you have all the charm of hunting out and discovering these architectural tit-bits for yourself.

Just outside the town walls we came upon the very interesting old church of St. Giles. The tower of this is all of wood, and, as may be seen inside, is constructed of mighty baulks of timber—black with age, and joined and bolted together in a manner

impossible to describe. Wooden ladders give access to the bells, and lead to the top of the tower, but we felt no desire to make the ascent or to grope our way in the dim, uncertain light amongst the gloomy recesses above, sacred to the dust and cobwebs of ages.

In this church rest the remains of the two Royalist generals, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, who together defended the town against Fairfax, and who were shot close by after its surrender in 1648 by order of the same Parliamentary commander. History has it that upon his first attack on the town Fairfax was repulsed with severe loss. Enraged at his failure and deeming the place too strong to be captured by direct assault, he surrounded the town and starved out the garrison, and in revenge for his first repulse he ordered the two defending generals to be shot. Let us hope that never again will Englishmen fight against Englishmen, and that the soil of old England will nevermore resound with the trumpet's call or the cannon's roar.

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## CHAPTER VI.

A Wayside Inn—Higham—A Pretty Village—Picturesque Houses—  
 The Land of Constable—In the Gloaming—An Old-time Hostel—  
 Guide Books—Hadleigh—A Quaint Old Town—An ‘Ave Maria’  
 Bell—An interesting Church—Ancient Weights and Measures—  
 Curious Chests—A Conceit in Words—Epitaphs.

INTERESTING though we found Colchester to be, abounding in quaint surprises, in little peeps of architectural scenery (if I may be allowed the term), still for all its old-world charm—a charm that comes alone of age—we were not sorry to get once more into the open country ; so on returning to our hotel, although it was the afternoon we ordered the horses to and resumed our pleasant pilgrimage along the rural byways and winding leafy lanes.

There was nothing special about the scenery after leaving Colchester till we came to the borders of Suffolk. Here, at the top of a hill that gave us a glorious prospect ahead, we came upon a picturesque wayside ‘public.’ This little hostel with its backing of woods made such a pretty picture that we were tempted to call a halt and to get our photographic apparatus down to take it, which action on our part brought the landlord out to view the proceedings. It is astonishing what interest country people always seem to take in photography. Of course the landlord posed himself to be taken in front of his inn ; it

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is always so. Whenever we wished to take a view of an old building, if there happened to be any one about to observe what we were doing, he, she, or they, as the case might be, most assuredly would come and take position right in front of the camera, and more or less spoil the composition as a picture ; it was only a matter of degree. Poor amateur photographer, he has much to put up with ! The landlord told us that the little inn had often been taken, and that the parties who took it generally sent him a copy, which remark we presumed to be a hint to ourselves to do likewise. He moreover informed us that the house was the property of a certain popular preacher, ' of whom you may have heard tell.' Yes, certainly we had, but we had no idea till then that the preacher in question owned a public house, and we uttered a remark to that effect, which elicited the reply, ' Well, sir, you see as how folks driving about country learns a good many things ;' and we could not deny the fact.

Descending now a steep hill, upon which was a cyclist notice board labelled ' Dangerous ' (of which hill and board mention has already been made), we crossed the pretty river Stour (at least it was exceedingly pretty just there ; I cannot answer for the rest of its course) and entered Suffolk. Here in the valley was a level stretch of land of several acres literally golden with buttercups, a sight to behold. Then a mile or so of pleasant country lane led us to the charming little hamlet of Higham. The church here is close by the roadside, so we dismounted to inspect it. We found that the old



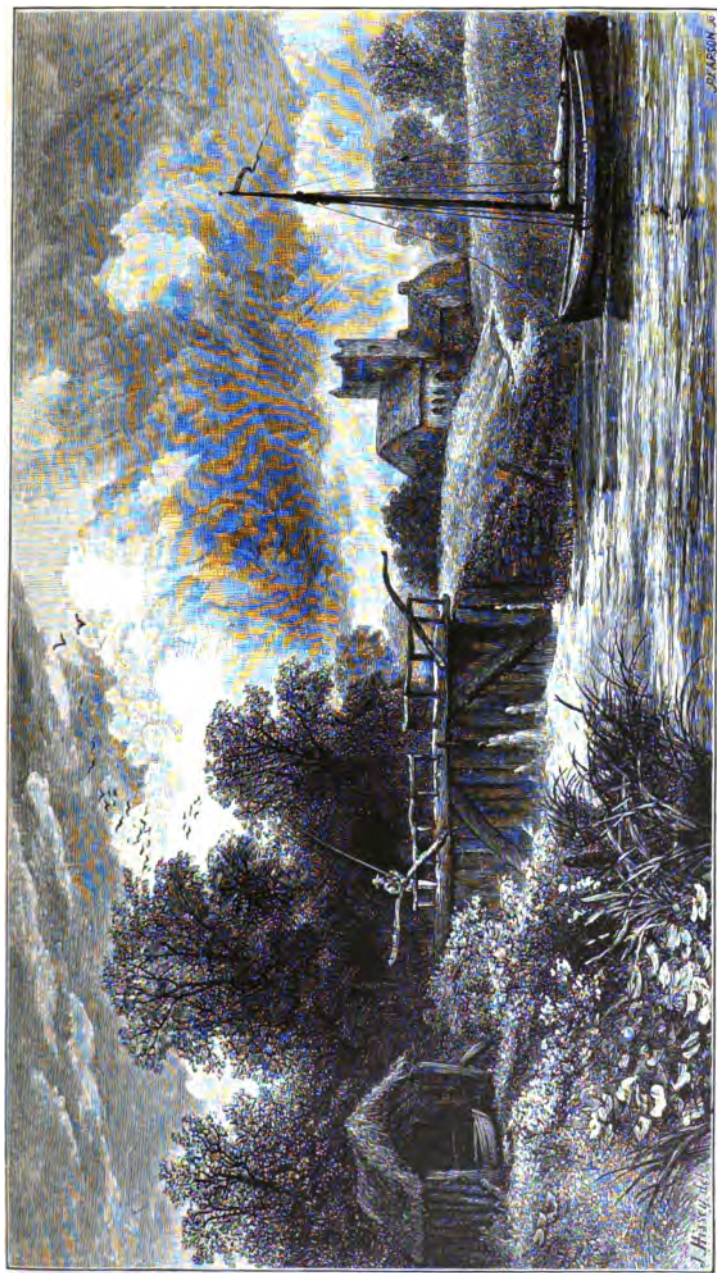
building had been restored ; it is dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, and possesses two fairly well carved figures in oak of these saints ; otherwise it contains nothing to attract the wanderer—at least if it does we failed to discover it after careful scrutiny. I make this reservation, for upon one occasion after inspecting an ancient church we left it in a somewhat disappointed mood, deeming that there was nothing in it worth seeing, and feeling that we had made a considerable *détour* for little profit ; but we afterwards learnt that we had overlooked a most curious brass, an excusable oversight on our part, as upon further inquiry we discovered that it was covered by a piece of carpet, upon which in its turn stood the harmonium. We now, when inspecting churches where harmoniums have place, are careful to look under the instruments, and always make it a point to lift up any matting or carpeting that there may be in such places of worship. Should there be a quaint inscription, there is a very fair chance of its being thus hidden. Indeed, as a curious coincidence I may remark that in the very next church that we entered after our experience just given, there was an harmonium, and upon moving this we discovered a very interesting inscribed tablet, of which more as we proceed.

The village of Higham appeared to us to be so pretty as almost to come up to our ideal of what an English country hamlet should be. So abounding in picturesque simplicity, in homeliness, in pleasing prosperity did it seem to us that soft sunny afternoon, as it lay asleep in the golden sunshine, with

its neat cottages and their gay flower-filled gardens, its old homes, mellowed by age, the very poetry of rural civilisation—pictures of contentment and peaceful abiding! One of these especially charmed us—an old half-timbered building standing back from the village street with clipped yew trees in front, so in harmony with the ancient house. Nor must I forget the most delightful old-fashioned inn that, from the glance we had of it in passing, struck us as being as cosy and picturesque a village hostelry as we had ever come upon.

Higham is well away from the improving influences of the railway, and that fact may in some measure account for its restful, mellow, old-time, unspoilt look. It may be, too, that the quiet loveliness of that fair English summer noon, with its golden lights and its long contrasting shadows of pearly grey (only to be rendered by the delicate tints of a water-colour), gave an added grace to the sweet beauty of the spot. Truly it may have enhanced its charm, but it did not make the rural homes and gay gardens, nor their pleasant setting of green fields and waving woods.

The road on from Higham to Hadleigh (where we arranged to spend the night) took us through a country of great sylvan loveliness. Our road, with many windings, led us along in a delightfully enticing manner; it was hilly, too, as well as winding, and full of scenic surprises. It was in this part of Suffolk that Constable painted some of his best pictures. He loved the Suffolk scenery, and declared this to be the most beautiful district in England;



IN THE LAND OF CONSTABLE



and its loveliness is none the less though so little famed or known or painted now.

The horn was in frequent requisition at the many sharp corners, for the way was narrow, the night coming on, and country people are much given to drive in such parts lampless and recklessly, trusting to the little traffic to meet no one. But these turnings and twistings of the road were suggestive of all sorts of pleasant possibilities. We had always the unknown before us; fresh prospects were ever opening out, each one seeming, if such could be, even more beautiful than the preceding. And what can be more delightful than driving through a pretty unfamiliar country in the peaceful gloaming, when the softened light spiritualises the landscape, when the meaner things are hidden in a vague uncertainty, and a glamour of mystery is over all? Such a drive is the very poetry of travel.

Past half-timbered homes of ancient date, and prosperous-looking, rick-surrounded farmsteads, whose windows gleamed in the golden light; past old windmills, whose great sails stood out like gigantic outstretched arms darkly silhouetted against the luminous sky; past red-roofed cottages, fragrant with the smell of burning wood, our way led us, till just as the light was fading from land and sky we reached the little town of Hadleigh, and pulled up there before the hospitable door of the ancient and one-time famous White Lion.

Our hostel proved to be a delightful example of the old-fashioned English inn, and the worthy landlord (who told us that he had been there for over

twenty-four years) was an excellent specimen of 'mine host'—civil, obliging, good-natured and chatty. Upon entering this ancient inn we were delightfully surprised to find ourselves in a glass-roofed courtyard, with galleries running around covered with clematis, and here and there were flowers and ferns in pots. Not always does it fall to the lot of the weary traveller to come upon such a pleasant, homely hostel at the end of his day's pilgrimage. In this courtyard, in former times, we were told that the Mystery Plays were performed before large audiences gathered from far and near. At the back of our inn we discovered in the morning a pleasant garden and bowling-green, in which we smoked our after-breakfast pipe and glanced at our guide-book to see what it had to say respecting Hadleigh. We found that it was very full of the past history of the place down to the times of the Saxons, but of the information generally desired by the traveller contained very little, and some even of that little we afterwards discovered to be wrong.

A charming little countrified town is Hadleigh, full of interesting old houses, many bearing plain evidence of past prosperity, for long years ago Hadleigh was an important seat of the woollen trade. Early in the fourteenth century a large body of Flemings settled here, and to this day the names of the villages around, such as Kersey, Linsey, bear testimony to the former extent of its manufacturing interests by the terms, still retained, that they gave to special products of the loom. And these old

Hadleigh merchants built for themselves enduring homes, beautified them with carvings, adorned their fronts with graceful or quaint devices and many a painted legend. They built for permanency in those times, not for a temporary resting-place ; they sought for beauty, too, as well as permanency, cared for it, expected it, obtained it ; and though the ancient town has lost its former prosperity, and seems to have fallen into a deep sleep never to waken more, the quaint and picturesque houses still stand, though, alas ! some have been more or less damaged by time and others ruined beyond recall by being refronted with little or no feeling for the work of the past.

Yes, in truth a pleasant little town is Hadleigh. I know not a more attractive one, possessing as it does a delightful air of mellowness and old-time calm, so grateful and rare in this busy money-making age. A town it is that has felt less than most such places the levelling influence of nineteenth-century progress, with all its ugliness and slavish uniformity. It is unspoilt by villas, terraces, or residences eligibly situated (with every modern convenience, but inconvenient withal), and shops of stucco and plate-glass are agreeably 'conspicuous by their absence,' neither has it any scattered outskirts invading the pleasant green fields around. A more charming town to ramble in there could not be ; it is full of interest, and abounds in pictures offering a wealth of subjects for the painter or etcher.

These men of old, it is manifest, built first of all for comfort and convenience, then they lovingly decorated their houses. They did not stick on

ornaments here and there without reason, as we do now, and deem such a proceeding artistic, nor did they see any beauty in meaningless projections, serving no useful purpose, with which the modern architect covers our walls, adding these merely for effect and but too plainly betraying their origin. Say what we will, such things are mere excrescences; it is a kind of 'decoration that does not decorate, an ornamentation that does not adorn,' and profits nothing save the builder's purse.

These men of old built dwellings for themselves and as it best pleased them, so these past-time homes are distinctly individual, full of character, and consequently delightful to look upon. A house then was made for the man, not man made to suit the house. The custom that now obtains of building houses by the dozen or fifties or more, in rows or terraces, each one as like the other as peas in a pod, happily did not then prevail.

These old towns charm us so because of the variety and thoughtful intention of their buildings. Each house is different in design and in detail, even the very materials of which they are constructed vary to a greater or less extent; some are partly or wholly of brick, others are of stone (and the stone again varies in kind from free-stone hewn or rough to flints rounded or square cut), others are half-timbered, others still are weather-tiled or have pargetted fronts, and so forth. Then of necessity these old houses differ in height, in projection of front and pitch of gable, causing a changeful play of light and shade in all these ins and outs; the



windows and doorways too vary in size, shape, and design ; moreover the sky-line is charmingly diversified with clustering chimneys, roofs, and dormer casements ; nowhere is there any sameness of repeated outline to weary the eye. In startling contrast all this with the formal rows of residences that the modern builder gives us, with all their wearisome monotony of multiplied forms, and ornamental details machine-produced by the million.

As we sauntered along the ancient streets of Hadleigh, we could not help feeling what a pleasant town it must have been in the heyday of its prosperity (not but that it is a pleasant one still), but thriving manufacturing towns in these times hardly strike the observer as being either agreeable or beautiful. Hadleigh was both. Commercial towns in the olden days were not the ugly and commonplace collection of factories, tall chimneys, and smoke-stained houses they now are. We have unlearned the lesson of combining utility with beauty. The steam-engine and huge factory have necessitated the crowding of workmen into large towns, towns of wretched slums, whose air is smoke and sulphur-laden and whose rivers are blackened with filth. In this competitive age the demand is for an article as cheap as it can possibly be produced, no thought is given as to the method of production or its consequences. What a contrast the smoke-stained collection of factories of to-day with the sunny, artistic towns of two centuries ago, bright, cheerful, and delightful though commercial ; but *nous avons changé tout cela*, and more's the pity. We are now

essentially a scientific and manufacturing people, not an artistic one. Yet in former times we produced much true art work. Our Chelsea and Derby pottery was the pride of collectors, our Chippendale and Sheraton furniture was famed for the beauty of its design and its perfect workmanship, and above all we built grandly and worthily, not just to last a ground-lease out; our cathedrals, abbeys, and ancient churches are truly petrified poems, our picturesque old Tudor and Elizabethan homes are unique, they are true natives of the soil, not copies of the architecture of other lands, an original and perfectly picturesque style, the expression of the artistic feelings of the Englishmen of those spacious times. It seems to be almost forgotten that once, before we converted our craftsmen into simple workmen, we were an artistic people.

Among the many interesting old houses in Hadleigh the most important now remaining is a large building in the long main thoroughfare street of the place; this has a finely carved and ornamented front with three oriel windows above. The house is now, alas! converted into shops, but the original staircase, a very fine one, still remains intact, and in the centre window the date 1676 is shown worked in narrow leaded glass among the lattice panes, not carved in the beams or cut in the plaster as generally is the case. The interiors of many of the Hadleigh houses are very quaint. We managed to obtain a glance into two or three of these, and finding one that was to let and unoccupied with the door open, we invited ourselves in and were much delighted

with the carved beams and other picturesque ornamental details, proving that the least thing had as much care bestowed upon it as the more important, and that the workman was not content to do less than his best.

But the chief object of interest in Hadleigh is its glorious old church, one of the largest in the county. After our ramble round the town we set forth in search of the clerk, and fortunately, to our pleasant surprise, we found him at home, for, according to our experience, it is more often than not a troublesome and tedious matter to discover the church clerk in country places, and we have generally found that useful party anywhere but at home—sometimes in the public house—but let me do him this justice, that when found he has always been eager to do duty as showman and turn an honest penny.

Entering the churchyard the grand gateway tower leading to the rectory at once strikes the observer. This is a fine fifteenth-century structure of Tudor brickwork. The gateway is embattled and is flanked by two towers of six stories and of some sixty feet in height; a slit in the thick walls was for the porter to inspect visitors before granting them admission, so that in some measure it would appear that this singular structure served the purpose of a fortress. I know of no other rectory with such a stately entrance. This remarkable edifice bears a singular resemblance to the grander gateway tower of Layer Marney; it would almost appear as if the designer of the one had taken an idea from the other.

Another peculiar feature certain to attract the visitor's attention is the ancient 'Ave Maria' bell projecting from the steeple and open to wind and weather. Entering the fine old church, a cathedral in miniature, the clerk first of all conducted us to the vestry, a spacious chamber with a grand roof of groined stone. At the intersection of the arches are bosses very sharply cut with grotesque faces of grinning demons, as perfect and defined these as though they had only just left the carver's chisel, instead of being the work of craftsmen dead and forgotten long centuries ago—all perfect save the centre and the finest one; this has been destroyed by being cut through to support a modern gas chandelier! Anything more ridiculously inconsistent than this juxtaposition of the fanciful conceit of the ancient monks with the very modern mechanical castings of Birmingham there could hardly be.

In the vestry we saw still carefully preserved some curious standard measures made of gunmetal. These consist of a quart, a peck, and a bushel; there is also a yard measure of the same metal, but this, unfortunately, is broken into three pieces. The peck measure has inscribed upon it—

For the Corporation of Hadleigh

I. G. MAIOR

1659.

Next, up some stone stairs worn concave with the tread of long-departed generations, we were conducted to the 'Priest Chamber,' situated just over the vestry. This room, as its name implies, was formerly inhabited by the Mass-priest. The roof

here is of oak, the beams of which are finely carved and in an excellent state of preservation. On the floor of this ancient chamber the clerk called our attention to three massive chests iron-bound, 'fearfully old' he said they were. This was manifest but indefinite; they are of curious construction, and it would be interesting to know their exact age. The combination of iron clasps and huge padlocks on one of these was a sight to behold, and moreover each padlock, for better protection, differed from the others. But even the many iron bands and the mighty padlocks of marvellous make did not hold the chests secure. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and our guide pointed out to us a series of auger holes bored in a circle in the wooden portion of one of the safes. It is presumed that these were made with the object of removing the portion of wood that they enclosed, and thus, without the necessity of filing through the iron bands or picking the cumbersome locks, the contents of these old chests could without much difficulty be got at. The clerk told us that they were full of old papers, but he had not the keys. Had it been possible, it would have greatly interested us to have glanced over their musty contents.

The church itself has suffered much at the hands of the notorious William Dowsing, who thus remarks in his journal of his visit to this place. 'We broke down thirty superstitious pictures' (qy. stained glass windows), 'and gave order for taking down the rest, which were about seventy, and took up an inscription, *'Quorum animabus propitiatur Deus,'* and gave

order for the taking down a cross on the steeple: gave fourteen days.' Most of the ancient brasses have been torn away, and there are few inscriptions of interest left. In the south wall we were shown a recess arched over, the stone-work being carved with figures and scrolls much mutilated. This recess evidently once contained a monumental tomb, possibly of a recumbent figure, and presumably of some one of importance. The clerk proudly pointed out this to us as no other than the tomb of the famous Guthrum, king of the Danes, who in the year 890 resided in the then royal town of Hadleigh. It will be remembered that it was into the camp of this Danish leader that King Alfred penetrated disguised as a harper. Manifestly the tomb in question is of a date centuries later than the period of King Guthrum. Most probably it is that of Arch-deacon Pykenham, who built the great gateway tower approach to the rectory—so at least we imagined, for he was doubtless buried here, and there is no other remains of any monument likely to have been his; and if he built so grandly in his life, he surely would have directed that a stately tomb should be raised to him when dead. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* The pompous tomb of a great prelate desecrated, robbed of its monumental figure, not even a letter of its inscription remaining, and now in this later century appropriated by tradition to some one else!

I chanced to have my valuable (?) guide-book in my pocket, and before leaving the church I thought I would look in it and see what particulars of the interior it gave. The font, it said, 'bears a curious

inscription, which may be read either backwards or forwards : *Νύσον ανομημα μη μοναν οψιν*, Wash my sin, and not my face only.' So I requested the clerk to show us this, but he said it did not exist now, having disappeared fourteen or fifteen years ago. It is a pity that this curious conceit in words was not preserved, but why did my guide-book of recent date say that it was there ?

The clerk told us the curfew was rung in Hadleigh till thirteen years ago. It was sounded at eight o'clock every night from the Sunday following October 10 to the Sunday nearest to March 10.

Glancing again into our guide-book we read ' The churchyard contains no very curious epitaphs, unless it be the following, which has been often printed, in memory of John Turner :—

My sledge and hammer lie declined,  
 My bellows have quite lost their wind,  
 My fire's extinct, my forge decay'd,  
 My vice is in the dust all laid.  
 My coal is spent, my iron gone,  
 My nails are drove, my work is done :  
 My fire-dried corpse lies here at rest,  
 My soul, smoke-like, is soaring to be blest.'

So we asked to be conducted to the tombstone upon which this famous epitaph was inscribed, but alas ! the clerk was unable to grant our request for the excellent reason (our guide-book notwithstanding) that the epitaph is not to be found in the churchyard now ; it was not there fifty years ago, our guide said, and for how much longer time it had disappeared he could not say. Thereupon we closed our guide-book and carefully put it out of sight for the rest of our

journey. During a tour we took a few years ago through Wales, we also took a handbook with us which described a beautiful drive amongst the mountains in the central portion of the Principality. On arriving at the spot we discovered to our regret that it was impossible to take this, because the road had ceased to exist half a century ago, a new and more level one having been made through another part of the country, more convenient and level though vastly less picturesque. When you get well away from the hackneyed line of tourist travel, guide-books are not always implicitly to be relied upon—nor their illustrations. We once saw in a certain work an engraving of Penshurst (a stately and inhabited mansion as is well known, standing in a pleasantly wooded park in the fair land of Kent). This was actually represented as a ruined castle with a weed-grown moat surrounding it! It is well before drawing from the imagination, or describing places in words, to see the originals first—it saves mistakes. I saw only the other day an illustration of Conway Castle with the sun shown as setting in the east ; but as the drawing was otherwise fairly correct, perchance the artist considered this a mere trifle.

But to return to the subject of epitaphs, from which I have wandered, it is a pity that so many of these, some most curious, should have become effaced or their lettering entirely weathered away, and no care taken to preserve them, save in a desultory way by a few antiquaries. Besides the clever epitaph to the blacksmith already quoted there used to exist in Hadleigh churchyard another curious pro-



duction of the same kind which I think is worthy of being saved from oblivion, and so have given it a place here.

To free me from domestic strife  
Death call'd at my house, but he spake with my wife.

Susan wife of David Patison lies here.

October 19, 1706.

Stop, reader, and if not in a hurry drop a tear.

During our drive we came upon many quaint and some clever epitaphs. Here is one from a Norfolk churchyard above the average, to a certain John Strange :—

In Heaven at last. Oh ! happy change,  
Who whilst I was on earth was Strange.

And here is another specimen of tombstone versification :—

Waking, sleeping, eating, drinking,  
Chattering, lying, life went by,  
While of dying little thinking,  
Down I dropped, and here I lie.

And still another that is a notable exception to the general rule in leaving the many virtues of the underlying dead to the reader's imagination, instead of proclaiming them in fulsome words believed by none :—

She lived respected, and died lamented.  
She was—but words are wanting to say what—  
Think all a wife should be, and she was that.

Whilst on the matter of epitaphs I may perhaps be allowed to quote still another one, which I do solely on account of its unique combination of memorial inscription and worldly advertisement, for

this existed in quite another portion of England, and was copied many years ago from a moss-grown stone in the churchyard of Upton-on-Severn. This then is it :—

Here, in hopes of reaching Zion,  
Lies the landlord of the Lion :  
Resigned unto the Heavenly will,  
His son keeps on the business still.

With this extraordinary and suggestive example of churchyard literature of past times, I may well conclude my remarks on epitaphs—and my chapter.

## CHAPTER VII.

A Wayside Memorial—Hintlesham—Tombstone Inscriptions—A Hilly Road—Ipswich—A Famous Inn—An interesting Old House—An Old-time Interior—An Ancient Hostel—Rushmere Heath—A Sea of Gorse—Kesgrave Church—The Burial-place of the Queen of the Gipsies—The Red Lion of Martlesham—A Toy River—Woodbridge—A curious Relic—The Pleasant Deben—Tidal Mills—Seckford Hall—A Home of the Past.

As we were leaving Hadleigh, just on the outskirts of the town we came upon a curious brick tower house with a walled enclosure. Apparently this edifice had originally been intended for the entrance gateway to some grand mansion *à la* Layer Marney. Whether the mansion was ever built or whether it had been destroyed we could not learn; history is silent as to this structure, and even tradition, generally so ready to take its place, on this occasion is silent too. It is just one of those old-time buildings that look as though they ought to be haunted or have some legend attached to them, and we felt almost aggrieved that we could discover nothing of the kind; but then Hadleigh is not a place which tourists frequent, otherwise perhaps a ready-made history might have been invented to suit the demand for show places, for I have known such an instance to occur.

About half a mile out of Hadleigh we observed a stone set in the midst of a field to the left of the

road. As there was a worn pathway that led only to this, we deemed that it was probably of some special interest, so we pulled the horses up and tramped across the field, to discover, if possible, the cause of the stone being erected thus. Upon a nearer approach we found that there were two stones, each bearing an inscription to the memory of Dr. Rowland Taylor, vicar of Hadleigh in the middle of the sixteenth century, who was one of the earliest martyrs of Queen Mary's Protestant persecution. After being imprisoned, and bribed in vain with a bishopric if he would recant his doctrines, he was eventually burnt at the stake on the spot where the stone stands.

Then to side with truth is noble when we share her wretched crust,  
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just.  
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside,  
Doubting in his abject spirit till his Lord is crucified,  
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.

This worthy Dr. Taylor was made of sterner stuff than a certain contemporary divine, the famous Simon Aleyn, vicar of Bray, who preferred holding his post to having the honour of martyrdom, and conveniently changed his creed four times to suit the changing times, making excuse that there was 'no trace of bigot in his blood;' to every foe, said he, 'I offer reconciliation's hand'—much, of course, to his own worldly advantage.

Of the two inscribed stones raised to the memory of Dr. Taylor on this spot where he suffered death, one is modern, but the other is the original stone placed there directly after Queen Elizabeth's acces-

sion to the throne. This latter memorial, though much battered and weathered with the exposure to the storms of centuries, is still legible, and from the quaint lettering thereon we managed to make out the following brief notice, which I give here, as probably in a few more years it will become undecipherable.

1555  
D Tayler in De  
Fending that  
was good at  
This Place lefte  
his Blode.

Proceeding on our way we passed through a very pleasant pastoral land. Our road was bounded by shady elms, and on either side of us were spreading meadows dotted with these trees, beneath which the lazy cattle were sheltering themselves from the heat of the summer sun. Had the hedges been away we might have been driving through some vast and noble domain, so park-like did the country appear. A soft, mellow, thoroughly English-looking landscape it was, with a restful, soothing green everywhere; green fields, green hedges, green foliage, and green grass all around, and by way of contrast we had a deep blue sky above, and now and again a peep of a red-roofed or yellow-thatched cottage.

Grass grows everywhere in the habitable world. Why do not poets sometimes sing of its beauty as well as of flowers that so quickly fade? What would the world be without its mantle of grass, green all the year round?—if not so fresh in winter as in spring, still it is green. It gives breadth to the landscape because it is everywhere. If needs must be, we could

exist without flowers, hardly without the everyday universal grass ; without this, what a barren world ours would be !

Presently we came to the picturesque and pleasant little village of Hintlesham. The church is by the roadside here, and as we noticed that the door was open, we called a halt and descended to inspect the interior of the ancient fane. We found the church to contain some fine monuments in marble and alabaster to the Timpley family, whoever they may have been, the earliest bearing date of 1558, and another by some extraordinary blunder that of 1968—at least after careful scrutiny we could make nothing else out of the figures. One of the monuments in question is inscribed as follows : “ Hic Jacet Nicholavs Timpley armiger qui obit . . . et Anna VXOR EIVS filia et Heres GVILMI Markham Armigeri . . . ” The dots represent spaces in the marble that have not been filled in. It would therefore seem that this monument was erected in the lifetime of this Nicholas Timpley and his wife, the dates being left to be added after their death, and that the worthy couple died and were buried elsewhere, so that the ‘ Hic Jacet ’ on this monument is probably not the truth. Another monument here, to the memory of ‘ Captayne Iohn Timperley,’ bearing date 1629, is of a most beautiful block of dark blue marble, beautiful enough and blue enough almost to have satisfied Browning’s proud Bishop, who when ordering his tomb demanded

Some lump, ah ! God, of lapis lazuli,  
Blue as the vein o’er the Madonna’s breast.

This monument appears at one time to have contained a magnificent brass, judging by the matrix thereon ; on either side of the place where the brass once was, are carefully executed carvings of military weapons and trophies. From the legend on this it would seem that the Timperleys as they prospered in the world added two letters to their name ; the inscription is curiously worded. I give the conclusion of the epitaph as a sample of its quality :—

Lett others tombes which y<sup>e</sup> glad heires bestowes  
Write golde in marble, greefe affects no showes.  
Theres a trew harte intoomb'd him & that bears  
A silent & sadd Epitaph writt in teares.

I have often wondered when deciphering these old tomb-inscriptions to families of position, who was responsible for the eccentric and changeable English displayed in them, and whether everybody then spelt just as best pleased them. One thing alone seems certain both as to spelling and grammar ; the writers of these old-time epitaphs were delightfully independent of all rules. According to my experience two inscriptions of the same date rarely have the same words, even the commonest, spelt in the same way, and I am now writing only of the wording of the memorials to men of position—noblemen, statesmen, soldiers ; whose families one must suppose to have been well educated ; but what can one expect of a time when succeeding generations spelt even their very surnames in different ways ? In fact some of the ancient inscriptions are so perplexing that I have puzzled over them for hours and at last have been obliged to confess myself beaten, in spite

of my best endeavours to comprehend their full purport. The verse I have given from Hintlesham church is a very favourable specimen in the matter of clearness—for the period. Here is another early sixteenth-century epitaph which we copied ; this we discovered further on in the church of St. Mary Tower, Ipswich, and I give it here in case my readers may care to puzzle out the meaning for themselves.

What can a deade man feede and cloth and holy precepts give?  
 It cannot be ; tush, tell not me, I know he still dooth live.  
 Live then, sweet soule, in ample rest, example to the rest.  
 Like thine his ground must low be laid that high wil build his nest.  
 If now think now on thank : If out of sight be out of minde,  
 Although 'tis wrong : yit light's thy loss that heavenly thank doost finde.  
 May never yet faire IPSWICH frye be foully so unkinde.

It will be noticed that this contains the familiar quotation, 'out of sight out of mind.' Though in the present case this is not the origin of the famous proverb, there is, I think, but little doubt that many an aphorism has been gathered from forgotten tombstone inscriptions, and sometimes even enshrined in verse by poets of a later day, though as a rule I must confess that I prefer the quaint originals with all their archaic spellings to the more modern renderings. Let us take as an instance of the spoiling of the old, the much-quoted line that appears in Sterne's 'Sentimental Journey': 'The Lord tempers the wind to the shorn lamb' (which line, by the way, a Scotch minister once declared to be in the Bible, though of course he could not find it there when asked to do so). This surely is no improvement upon the original: 'To the close-shorne sheepe, God gives winde by measure.' Sterne, in appropriating this



line, strangely overlooked the fact that lambs are not shorn, though sheep are!

But enough and to spare of epitaphs; let us remount the phaeton and proceed on our way, for we have far to travel and much to see before we reach our night's destination at Woodbridge. As we drove on the country became more open and hilly (for Suffolk at any rate), but the hilly road had the merit of affording us extensive views now and again as we reached the higher ground. Passing a picturesque old battered windmill that had evidently seen better days, at the bottom of a rather steep descent we came upon a large red-brick farmstead with fine barns and other outbuildings gathered around; this large house, from its public situation close by the roadside, appeared to us as though it must have been formerly a prosperous coaching hostelry, and only converted into a farmhouse when its services in the former capacity were no longer required. Fortunately the old place has lost but little if any of its picturesqueness by the change; the ancient stabling has, without much alteration, made capital barns and the like, and doubtless the one-time roomy and comfortable old inn has been converted into an equally comfortable and commodious farmhouse; and doubtless also, were there only travellers on the road to entertain again, it could without much trouble be reconverted into an hostelry.

Driving on we soon came in sight of Ipswich. We entered the town by its busy side, past a confusion of railways, gasworks, tall factory-like chimneys, and rows of modern cottages, all these being half-

hidden and blended by haze and smoke. What a deal of ugliness is the outcome of man's seeking for light and locomotion in these days! Entering the town we asked our way to the historic hostel of the White Horse, for here it was that Mr. Pickwick met 'with a romantic adventure with a middle-aged lady in yellow curl-papers.' There can be no mistake as to this being the actual inn, for to quote from 'Pickwick': 'In the main street of Ipswich, on the left-hand side of the way, a short distance after you have passed through the open space fronting the Town Hall, stands an inn known far and wide by the appellation of the White Horse, rendered the more conspicuous by a stone statue of some rampagious animal with flowing mane and tail . . . which is elevated above the principal door.' As is the case with all old towns that have not fallen into utter decay, ancient Ipswich, as far as its buildings are concerned, is growing younger every day, and the famous White Horse has not escaped the improving mania. This formerly picturesque hostel, dating back to the early part of the sixteenth century, has been in later years refronted with white brick in the simple unadorned style of a plain wall pierced by a square doorway and sundry square holes for windows; the old carved stone 'rampagious animal,' however, is still 'elevated above the principal door.' Fortunately it is only the outside that has suffered; internally the house is much as it was in the old coaching days, a rambling building of many passages and staircases; the courtyard (as is the comfortable fashion of the excellent inns of the eastern counties)

is glass-covered, with a fountain playing and ferns around, and many joints of meat hanging, that speak well for the traveller's cheer who wisely selects to stay at the sign of the White Horse.

Of the many renowned inns of the coaching age that once existed in Ipswich, the majority are no more, and, according to a local authority, the disappearance of these ancient hostelries has given rise to the following doggerel lines :—

The White Horse shall kick the Bear  
And make the Griffin fly,  
Shall turn the Bell upside down,  
And drink the Three Tuns dry.

The White Horse was the main posting inn from which the mail-coaches were all advertised to start, according to the notices of the time, 'God and weather permitting.' Modern railway directors do not trouble to make this reservation.

There are several most interesting old houses of the sixteenth century still existing in Ipswich, but above all others undoubtedly the best preserved and most noteworthy is the one in what is termed the Butter Market, known by the title of the 'Sparrowe's House,' from the name of the family who once owned it. This is truly a grand old house, quaint, ornate, and beautiful, three qualities difficult to combine and rarely to be found in modern architecture ; an ancient building it is that would attract attention and compel admiration even were it in old-world Nuremberg, but being merely in a provincial town in England, it is little regarded or known—it possesses not the inestimable advantage of being foreign.

This delightful old house adds a wonderful charm to the street in which it stands. It is dignified, homely though stately; the windows are both prominent and graceful features in the building, not merely glazed voids. We seem to have lost the art of making such a thing as a window beautiful; plate-glass has sadly mastered the modern architect. The carved ornamentation on the front of this rare old building is rich without being overdone, the details of the decoration are manifestly thought out, not details taken from stock office patterns and done by contract at so much a square yard, and there is a sufficiency of plain space to give effect to the decorative designs.

The house is quaintly original; delightfully unlike any other house, it clearly asserts its individuality, it is graceful in mass as seen from a distance, the ornamentation is added to necessary construction, a building first of all obviously designed to be lived in, then rationally decorated. Though the effect of the whole is exceedingly rich, there is nothing extravagant about it, yet nothing mean or trivial, and herein lies its especial charm. Would that modern architects could do the like! but what can one expect in an age that is mechanical rather than artistic, when anyone who chooses can dub himself an architect, and can practise as such if he can find clients? And has not a past president of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the late Ashbel Welch, 'a man of rare judgment and remarkable executive ability,' laid it down as an axiom, 'That is the best engineering or building, not which

makes the most splendid, or even the most perfect work, but that which makes a work that answers the purpose at the least cost.' Beauty for the sake of beauty seems to be a thing unthought of now ; the value of art in raising our ideas and making our lives more lovely is lightly esteemed in a century that is above all scientific.

This old home of the Sparrowes has now been converted into a bookseller's shop, but fortunately without spoiling its characteristic features more than necessary in the conversion, and a most delightful shop it makes. We entered to purchase a few trifles that we did not require, in order to get a glance at its interior, and the proprietor, seeing the great interest that we took in the place, most kindly showed us over it. First we inspected a very fine large room upstairs having a richly moulded ceiling ; this is now used as a library, and a beautiful room it is—it seemed to us an ideal library. Then the owner took us to see the truly magnificent dining-room ; panelled this all with ancient oak, having a rich dark hue that comes only of age, the panelling divided with fluted pillars supporting enriched capitals and having a carved frieze above. The chief feature of this delightful and restful apartment is the grandly carved chimney-piece, likewise of oak ; this bears the date of 1603, and has the initials ' W. S.' for William Sparrowe, whose family crest, a unicorn, has a place amongst the wealth of ornament ; the horn of the unicorn is of silver, and is quaintly effective.

In the oldest part of Ipswich, near to the river,

are a number of most interesting old houses and inns, the fronts of which are decorated with curiously carved woodwork. These ancient houses tell of a time when the wealthy shopkeepers and even merchants lived on the spot where their business was conducted. The fanciful conceits of some of these old carvings—grotesque jokes in wood—are very refreshing to the eye in this matter-of-fact age, so spontaneous and essentially non-mechanical are they, so well do they express the playful spirit of the mediæval craftsmen. We have so long and successfully been converting our workmen into human machines, that the inventive faculty of the old-time craftsman is no longer to be had, even if we would pay for it. Now and again too, in some out-of-the-way corner of this riverside Ipswich, may be found charming bits of old hammered ironwork, not yet bought up by the emissaries from Wardour Street. In the present day the modern builder procures his ironwork ready made from Birmingham, and the same stock patterns meet the traveller all over the country. The designs are not always bad in themselves, only one becomes weary in time of the endless sameness and the monotonous repetition of similar forms.

Perhaps amongst the many quaint buildings of which Ipswich can boast, after Sparrowe's House, that of the ancient Neptune Inn is the most interesting. This bears upon its front the date of 1639. Externally and internally this fine relic of past-time architecture abounds in richly-carved decorations; within the mantelpieces and wainscoted rooms are

especially worthy of note. Manifestly this must have been a house of consequence in the days gone by. It would be interesting to learn the history of this old place, for it is one of those buildings that seem to breathe of romance. What merry-makings must have taken place in its olden chambers! If only for one short hour we could re-people these with the guests gathered therein, say one winter's night when Charles II. was king—if only!

The road from Ipswich to Woodbridge traverses Rushmere Heath, a glorious open expanse. A wide sea of yellow gorse was on either side of us, across which we watched the mighty cloud shadows come and go. The peculiar perfume of the gorse was almost overpowering, and the golden glory of the far-spreading waste, lit up as it was by the bright sunshine, was a miracle of glowing colour. Well might Linnæus have been struck silent with admiration on his first beholding an English gorse-strewn common in all its wonderful beauty; even fair Italy, that land of colour, cannot show tints more gorgeous.

This heath was once famous for its highwaymen, and a gibbet was erected upon it for their special benefit. Truly in those good old times a driving tour could hardly have been undertaken without a possible acquaintance with the knights of the road. To some bold spirits it is just possible that the spice of danger and the possible adventure of such a meeting would lend zest to such an outing. For myself I am fain to confess that I prefer the peaceful present. The bold highwayman may be a very picturesque person-

age on paper ; I prefer him, however, thus poetically considered, to the stern reality.

At the little village of Kesgrave, about half way on our stage, is a quaint old church, and in the too thickly peopled God's Acre that surrounds it are as many as eight fine yew trees. Finding the sexton there we asked if there was anything of interest to see. In reply he pointed out to us a tombstone to Repronia Lee, who, as the inscription informed us, was 'Queen of the Gipsies,' and died at the age of twenty-five. It would seem that this is the burying-place of that royal house. We were not even aware till then that the gipsy tribe had a queen to rule over them, and we were even obliged to confess our woful ignorance to the sexton, who had the advantage of us in this important matter. We discovered here also another rather curious tombstone to the memory of a horse dealer, quaintly carved with the figure of a man holding a horse.

Continuing on our way we passed through some more wild open country, till at the bottom of a hill we came to the pretty hamlet of Martlesham, situated by the side of a pleasant stream, which our trusty map dignified by the title of the river Fyn—a toy river, truly ; this stream is crossed by a picturesque bridge. The old grey bridge, primitive village, and tiny river, together form a subject worthy of the artist's brush. Here we found a country inn, the Red Lion to wit, and very red the Lion was, as red indeed as a plentiful supply of the most brilliant vermilion could make him. This sign has a history ; it was formerly the figure-head of



one of the Dutch ships of war that were captured at the battle of Sole Bay, at least so tradition says ; this figure-head is now placed under the great gable of the inn and does duty as a sign, and a very quaint and effective one it makes. This Lion has become famous, and a local saying has it, 'As red as the Martlesham Lion,' though *à propos* of what I do not know, so that it would appear that this Lion has a reputation for colour to keep up, which may account for its assertive hue. Strangely enough, this is the second time that we have come upon a country inn-sign made from the figure-head of a Dutch ship, in both cases the carvings representing lions, and likewise both being painted a startling red.

Woodbridge is one of those old-fashioned towns that may be described as more interesting than picturesque ; as we had still an hour of daylight left on arriving there, we took an evening stroll round the place. In a narrow street leading down to the river we came upon a curious relic of the past. By the side of an ancient building we observed a huge crane, constructed of large beams of timber, leaning over the street. We inquired of a native the purpose of this, and were informed that formerly it was employed to weigh loads of hay and straw that were shipped here, the curious feature of the arrangement being that the wagon with its freight was bodily raised in the air during the proceeding. This primitive method of weighing goods was, we were told, actually employed till within a dozen years ago.

The tidal river Deben here (sung of in pleasant verse by Bernard Barton, the little-known East Anglian poet), with its wooded banks and old-time buildings, its water-mills and rough timber jetties, is most picturesque. We made our way to one of these old mills, and finding the worthy miller himself within, and not indisposed to chat, we entered into a conversation with him and soon became acquainted with the peculiarities of tidal mills. It would seem that the water supply of these is unfailing, which is one advantage, but of course the mills have to be worked according to the state of the tide, which sometimes serves only in the night time, which is somewhat inconvenient. It appears that when the tide has flown in the water is held back by flood-gates, and when the tide ebbs the stored-up water is employed to drive the mills. It was suggested some time back by an eminent engineer that when our supply of coal became exhausted, perhaps, owing to our insular position, we might still retain something of our manufacturing supremacy by the erection of tidal mills around our coasts. I cannot agree in this opinion after inspecting a tidal mill. When we have to trust to such a changing motive power as the tides, I fear that there will be but little left of our manufacturing supremacy. Windmills, water-mills, and tidal mills are picturesque, but hardly commercially satisfactory. It may even be that the twentieth century may see a new motive power. Who, after recent discoveries, can say what hidden possibilities may not be awaiting birth in the womb of Time? How intensely interesting it would be to

have a foreglance into a science text-book of a century hence! Could the wildest dreams of our ancestors ever have imagined the wonders of steam and electricity? We have outdone even the fabled marvels of the Arabian Nights. Fact is ever stranger than fiction, and our modern machine-wrought miracles are in very truth stranger far than any story conceived by the fertile brain of the inventive oriental.

It was very pleasant that peaceful evening, loitering by the side of the slowly-flowing Deben, watching the water as it glided gurgling on its way to the all-absorbing sea, golden where it reflected the sunset glow above, and a silvery grey where it stretched away in shade till lost in the dreamy distance. What a soothing, restful thing it is thus to watch a river in the evening light, glancing and gleaming along with a ceaseless onward flow, motion almost without sound! There always seems to me to be a certain sense of mystery about a river seen in the half light of the uncertain gloaming. However undefined the landscape may be, you may trace the river's winding way by its golden or silvery gleaming leading the eye into a far-off shadowy dreamland. All rivers lead to the sea, and the sea leads everywhere; even the most insignificant river is in touch with the whole wide world, and how silently and spectrally in the gloaming the ships upon a river pass you by! Whence have they come and whither are they going?—the question arises almost without your knowing it. At such an hour there is a sort of vague delight in letting fancy have for once

her way. Comes yonder ghost-like ship—so ghost-like that she might be the veritable 'Flying Dutchman' herself that at last Vanderdecken had managed to steer into port—comes she from some Western El Dorado, or from the golden cities of far Cathay, or from whence? But a truce to these romantic imaginings.

Old ocean holds no terrors any more ;  
We touch the limits of the farthest zone,  
And would all Nature's fastnesses explore :  
Oh, leave some spot that fancy still may own,  
Some far and solitary wave-worn shore,  
Where all were possible and all unknown !

As we lingered by the quiet riverside watching the golden light fading from the sky and the night being slowly evolved from the day, our romantic dreams were brought to a termination by the 'cravings of the inner man,' for it is hard for a hungry mortal to be poetic ; we therefore bade farewell to the pleasant Deben and sought our hotel. A very picturesque and pleasant river in truth is the Deben, though it cannot boast upon its side of any ruined abbey, or crumbling castle, or stately home, or any famous town ; and though the very name of it, I make bold to say, is known to but few Englishmen living out of Suffolk, still it is a charming stream. Perhaps it is even the more charming for the absence of these things ; its gentle windings and quiet flow are best suited to the homelike scenery through which it runs its uneventful course.

As we retraced our steps homeward, or rather hotelward, we chanced to glance into the window of a stationer's shop, and our eyes were attracted by the



ON THE SUFFOLK COAST



photograph of an apparently half-ruined mansion, manifestly a grand building in its day. Judging that possibly it was in the near neighbourhood, we made inquiry, and found that the old house was Seckford Hall, and only two short miles away; and as from the photograph the structure appeared a rambling one, and to be interesting, we determined to walk thither in the morning and to defer our start that we might have full leisure to inspect and sketch it, for, as we were never tired of reminding ourselves, we had no train to catch and no time-tables to worry us.

A pleasant walk through a pretty country, that made the two miles seem like one, brought us to Seckford Hall. We came upon the old home suddenly, for it is built in a hollow and is not visible till just before you reach it. Why our ancestors so generally selected secluded hollows and valleys in which to raise their stately edifices has always been a problem to me. It is stated that they were so placed for shelter, but our forefathers were a hardy race, and I can hardly imagine that merely the consideration of shelter would much influence their choice of spot for a residence. But for some cause or another we do find a large majority of old-time homes lowly placed; there are a few notable exceptions, such as Hardwick Hall, which stands boldly on the top of a hill, facing and braving all the winds of heaven, but the few exceptions only emphasise the prevailing rule.

Seckford Hall we found in a neglected if picturesque state. A portion of the ancient mansion is now converted into a farmhouse, and in this portion

the old stone mullion and leaden lattice windows have been replaced by the more modern sash contrivances, which are sadly out of keeping with the building. At the first sight there appeared to be something wanting that an ancient building should possess, and it was some time before we could make out what this want was, namely, the strange absence of ivy or any green creeper upon its time-stained walls.

A grand specimen of Tudor brickwork is Seckford Hall, its long front being broken by six gables. As we wandered down the weed-grown road that led to the stone carved doorway, a farm-labourer chanced to be passing, and of him we asked if it were possible to get a glance at the interior of the house. He appeared astonished at our request, which proved to us that tourists are little known in these parts. He replied, 'I doan't know, I'm sure; perhaps the missus 'ud let you have a look, but there ain't much worth seeing; 'tis a rare tumbledown old place.' A small coin changed ownership, upon which the man said that he would go in and ask the 'missus hisself; ' thereupon he disappeared for a time, leaving us standing without. We did not have, however, to wait long, for the shepherd (if we did not mistake his calling) reappeared at the front doorway, closed now against intruders by a simple gate, smiling his best smile and saying that 'the missus told I as how I moight show you the hall.' So we entered. A fine hall it is, with oak wainscoting around and minstrel's gallery above, supported by carved oak pillars, the hall and gallery being lighted by great



windows ; the whole apparently remaining just as it was three centuries ago, unaltered and uncared for since, a picture of desolation, the woodwork fast going to decay, the very pillars worm-eaten and seemingly hardly able now to support the gallery above. But for all it is a grand interior ; age and decay have not robbed it of its fine proportions. Were I ever to be in the happy position of having to build a stately country home for myself, nothing would delight me more than to faithfully copy this pleasing example of ancient architecture. There is no flimsy construction here ; all is, or was, solid and substantial. The ancient architect built beauty into his houses ; he relied upon form and graceful proportions for his effect rather than upon the superficial decoration of papering and painting, and so his buildings remain impressive and beautiful even in decay. Over a side entrance we noticed quite an elaborate coat of arms moulded in iron and let into the stonework above ; the stone has weathered, but the iron still retains its ancient sharpness. Why this has not rusted I cannot say.

In the church at Woodbridge, on our return, we saw a very fine alabaster and coloured monument to the Seckford family, who would seem to have been important personages in their day, one Thomas Seckford having been Master of the Court of Requests in the reign of Elizabeth. This monument appears to have been restored at some recent period, which may account for its comparatively perfect state and the freshness of its colouring.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Rural Pictures—The Beauty of Age in Buildings—Wickham Market—A Curious Bell—Provincialisms and Folk-lore—Country Characters—A Decayed Coaching Inn—A Windmill Land—Saxmundham—A Picturesque Village—Poetical Business Effusions—The Trials of a Farmer's Life—Bramfield—An Interesting Church and Curious Tower—A fine Sculptured Monument—An Old Fresco—A Quaint Epitaph—Ancient Armour.

LEAVING Woodbridge, we soon found ourselves once more driving along the pleasant country roads, with the fresh green meadows and the red tilled fields on either side of us. The inhabitants of small towns have certainly the advantage that they can readily get away into the real country, and there are few things more enjoyable than a leisurely ramble on a summer evening down an English tree-bordered and bird-haunted lane, or a quiet stroll along a rural footpath that takes one in a familiar friendly way right into the heart of the land, close by cottage homes and picturesque farmsteads, leading through many fields to unexpected, out-of-the-way beauty spots.

The weather still favoured us. We had a bright, sunny, breezy day, in which to continue our journey; the sky overhead was a glorious deep blue, chequered only by the lightest of summer clouds. A wild warm wind was blowing from the west,

balmy yet bracing, stirring and rustling the leaves and causing a rippling movement over the grassy fields and many-tinted woods. All nature seemed in a joyous mood; high above us the lark was singing, a speck of song in a world of light and brightness, and in the tangled hedgerows the birds were twittering companionably. The air was clear, fragrant too with the scent of blossoms of wild flowers and of new-mown hay, the sweet odour of the honeysuckle being especially noticeable and welcome; and the sun shone softly down on all the spreading landscape. He must have a sad heart indeed who could not be glad upon such a day.

An American writer has given it as his opinion that it takes a good many bad days in England to breed a fair one, but when that fair one does come, he owns that it is worth the price paid for it. I can only remark that we had a perfect day without any previous bad ones, since our start, to make compensation for, and I make bold to say that such days are by no means so rare as some writers would make us believe, and in this matter I think that I ought to write with some authority, having for years past now taken my summer holiday in some portion of my own country, driving here and there by road, and for the enjoyment of such a journey much of course depends upon the weather. Yet for all the American's often quoted opinion that I have given, I can honestly say, that though of necessity we have experienced a variety of weathers, yet on the whole our memories are of sunny days or days of gentle gloom. Seldom have we been detained

inn-bound for a whole day, though in the course of our travels we have tempted Providence by driving amongst the mountain lands of Wales and Cumberland and over the wild and windy moors of Devon and Cornwall, regions which bear an unenviable notoriety for moisture, and where it is supposed to be always raining—except when it is snowing.

Now and again, as we drove along, we caught a glimpse of the winding Deben, gleaming like a streak of silver through the green and wooded landscape. On our way we passed by one or two rural roadside inns, with moss-grown roofs and lichen-laden walls, nothing much to boast of architecturally, but pleasing to the eye notwithstanding because of their simple homeliness and time-toned surroundings. Many a picturesque cottage, too, we passed, with tiny gardens. One now comes up before me, an ancient thatched abode, with uneven roof and long low lattice windows. In the little garden the cotter's sunburnt children were romping about as happy as kings, or happier, and were they the children of a millionaire they could not be more ; their miniature territory was to them a kingdom. How robust in health they seemed, and how gladsome sounded their merry silvery laughter and their childish prattling ! I pity the man who cannot sympathise with such minor elements of human interest of the road. A cottage it was that might have walked out of some old picture, such a cottage as Patrick Nasmyth loved to paint, a bit of wayside poetry.

How age beautifies buildings in the country, tints their walls with many changeful hues, makes

golden and ruddy their roofs with lichen, green and grey, as well as with mosses ; how great the contrast of the charm of all this colouring with the smoke-stained dingy results of time upon our town edifices ! No art or cunning of human hands has ever yet approached the work of unpaid Nature ; no artist can paint like her. How lovingly she decorates an old ruin or wall, how tenderly and gracefully she hides the scars of man's destroying hand ! First she sends the lowly lichens and meek mosses, then ivy clambers up the ancient walls, bits of green grass, tiny unassuming ferns, and many an idle growing thing finds a home in crevices everywhere ; and plants and sweet wild flowers oftentimes make their appearance, if only Nature is left to herself to do as she will—till at last the desecrated fane or battered castle keep is even more lovely in its last estate than in the full glory of its Gothic prime or stately perfectness.

Driving on through a pleasantly wooded country we reached Wickham Market, a picturesque though sleepy-looking little town, possessing a rather fine church, which has an interesting octagonal tower built of flint and surmounted by a tall steeple. From this steeple, as at Hadleigh, the ancient Ave Maria bell still projects, supported by a bracket. Strangely enough, during all our wanderings in rural England these are the only two instances that have come under our notice of this quaint old-time manner of hanging a bell being retained until this day. From this tower we were told that forty or more churches could be seen on a fine day, and that the day was

favourable for the view if we cared to mount to the top. We did not care, so took the fact for granted ; we are not of those travellers who feel it obligatory 'to do' everything there is to do on a journey. Duty is one thing and pleasure another ; we happily managed to combine both by making pleasure a duty. A holiday is only half a holiday if we feel compelled to see things we actually care little or nothing about, just for the sake of saying we have seen them. In the niche above the entrance porch of the church we noticed an image of the Virgin Mary and Child, which would have been to Master Will Dowsing and his Puritan friends as a red rag to an enraged bull. Doubtless there was a similar image here in his time, which was carefully destroyed.

Over a house in the town we read the inscription, 'horse-gentler,' and inquiring the exact interpretation of this we were informed that it meant horse-breaker. In spite of school boards, railways, and telegraphs, there are many such old-fashioned provincialisms still retained in the eastern counties. At Woodbridge we observed in a shop window the notice, 'Stover sold here.' As we could not imagine what 'stover' could be, we made inquiry, and learnt that 'stover' was the local term for clover. 'Tempest' we also heard employed more than once to describe a storm, likewise 'drafting' for 'drawing.' 'What are you drafting?' was one day asked us by a farmer, who discovered us sketching his old homestead. 'Keeping-room' is a term, too, not infrequently used to describe a living-room.

'Hinder it be,' for 'yonder it is,' was the favourite reply of the rustics when pointing out any place or thing to us, and, as in many other remote parts of England, the old Saxon plural of *-en* (as still used in 'men,' 'children,' and 'oxen') is yet doggedly retained in many words, more especially in 'housen' for houses.

But better far than these provincialisms, a good deal of folk-lore and many wise sayings may still be picked up by the traveller in the remote rural portions of East Anglia. A few that I have gathered and noted down I give here, as they may interest my readers, and the day may come when they will have disappeared for ever.

Here is one as to the purchase of a horse ; this from an ostler :—

Four white feet, you may give him away.  
Three white feet, don't keep him a day.  
Two white feet, you may recommend him to a friend.  
One white foot, keep him to his end.

The following relates to cats :—

Whoever keeps a black cat  
Will prosper and be fat ;  
Whoever keeps a white cat,  
Money he will surely lack.

And it was told us, that so great in times past was the value set on a black cat, that it was exceedingly difficult to keep one at all, they were almost sure to be stolen.

Here is a rhyme of advice as to the worth of a swarm of bees, which has some show of reason in it, as July is too late in the year for them to gather a crop of honey :—

A swarm of bees in May  
Is worth a load of hay.  
A swarm of bees in June  
Is worth a silver spoon.  
A swarm of bees in July  
Isn't worth a fly.

Of weather lore we heard a great deal, possibly because, driving, we were interested in the matter, and often asked of ostlers and others what they thought the morrow would be like. On weather-lore the shepherds are the greatest authorities, and next to them I think sailors, but as our travels were mostly inland we had fewer opportunities of questioning these. Said a shepherd to us one day with whom we got purposely into conversation upon the topic, 'You see, sir, when the horns of the moon be turned up' (according to such authorities the moon has very much to do with the weather) 'it's most sure to be fine, but when they be turned down it means rain. It's like this; when the horns be turned up she holds the water in a hollow like, but when they be turned down, why she can't keep it.' Which valuable information was quite fresh to us, and in the worthy shepherd's opinion deserving of a tip. The east coast fishing folk still hold that when the moon's horns are down stormy weather may be looked for with some degree of certainty, or, as they express it in doggerel verse which I trust I have given correctly—

When the young moon's on her back,  
Of fine weather there's no lack;  
When the new moon's off her back,  
Take in sail and homeward tack.



Here are two more sayings as to farming to conclude with, which seem to me to contain more wisdom than such sayings generally do. The first relates to sowing. 'If thou wouldst have a good crop, sow sparingly, pour not out of a sack.' It is well known that seeds too plentifully spread serve but to choke one another when they spring up. The next proverb concerns the suitable position of land for a crop. 'Near trees no corn,' wheat requiring an open country, with a plentiful supply of sun and drying wind, a fact that farmers are not so regardful of as they might be. Doubtless there are many superstitions and curious charms for the cure of various diseases still firmly believed in and practised in country places, but these are mostly held by old wives, who, I fancy, are shy of imparting their cherished knowledge to strangers. However, be that how it may, on this point we could gather nothing. Truly one old body said she had a never-failing charm for the toothache, and offered to cure us were we suffering—for a consideration. We happily were free from that tormenting pain, but nevertheless offered to purchase her secret at our own valuation. But she would not disclose it, not even for half-a-crown, and we did not venture to bid higher for information which, 'could you use it rightly, would make your fortune.' There was a great deal of saving virtue, we imagined, in that one reservation, 'rightly.' If you will only put yourself in the way of it, you may come upon many a curious character whilst wandering in little-travelled parts—the further from

railways the better the chance of discovering such.

A short distance from Wickham Market we noticed a five-fingered sign-post. We had never before met one with such an abundant supply of arms, and, strange to say, all the arms were in excellent condition, the inscriptions upon each being perfectly legible ; would that all sign-posts were as serviceable to the traveller as this ! But then in these railway days who ever dreams of going any distance by road ? The local inhabitants know of course their way about without guidance, so that sign-posts are really but little required.

As we proceeded along we presently came to the Lion Inn, evidently a decayed coaching house, and looking now sadly desolate in its fallen estate, doing duty as a roadside public. We were on the main high road from London to Yarmouth, erst busy with much traffic, and musical with the sound of the frequent coach-horn. Now we had the way all to ourselves ; since we left Woodbridge we had met no vehicle of any kind, and the one or two people we did see appeared to be farm labourers going to or from their work. Sadly deserted are the old high roads, amongst the most lonely places in the land.

Then on through shady woods our way led us to a very pretty little hamlet, the name of which was not given on our map ; the village school here with its yellow thatched roof and quaint bell turret tempted us to pull up and make a sketch. Remounting the phaeton, we drove for a time by the side

of a large and wide-spreading park; the mansion to this is large and ugly, but of value by acting as a foil and thereby accentuating the beauty of the sylvan scenery around. Ugliness sometimes has its uses.

We were now once more in a windmill country, and the windmills were all of wood of the old-fashioned type, aged and picturesque. These mills were mostly at work, giving by the movement of their sails, now white in sunshine, now dark in shade, quite a look of life to the landscape. To me there is a great charm about these old windmills; they give a character to a view, making oftentimes even a flat stretch of country interesting, for they are always delightful to behold. I never yet saw an ugly windmill, nor one that would not make a pretty picture. Windmills have this peculiarity, that they differ from all other buildings; firstly their necessity is to be in motion, and secondly they constantly vary in outline from the same point of view, according as the direction of the wind changes. I greatly fear that these old friends of mine are doomed to become rarer and rarer as time goes on, and some day even to disappear altogether. Now and again, more especially in Sussex, where they abound, when going over the same ground after the space of a few years, I have regretfully noted the absence of one or more of my favourite mills. Sometimes they get burnt down; 'run themselves afire,' as the millers term it, during a heavy wind, or else become so rickety with age that they are either pulled down for the sake of the materials or are allowed to go to utter ruin, the ruin being hastened by the villagers

plundering the old structure for firewood. Year after year, in different parts of the country, first one and then another of these picturesque structures vanish from the prospect—and never yet, so far, have I come upon one in the course of erection ; so it is a mathematical certainty that if they continue to disappear thus, and no new ones are built, the day must come when the picturesque windmills will be a thing of the past.

We made our midday halt at Saxmundham, a quiet little market-town, pleasantly situated in the midst of a well-wooded country, one of those picturesque old-fashioned places that in a commercial age are so charmingly uncommercially unprogressive, and unspoilt by growing suburbs ; looking now, doubtless, much as it did a century ago, and as in all probability it will look a century hence. 'A slumbrous town that wakes up into some semblance of activity one day in seven, when the market is held there, and farmers and their wives jog in from the country round to do a little business and a good deal of gossip. An uneventful existence these Saxmundhams appear to lead, but a comfortable and contented one withal, untroubled by the keen competitive spirit of the age.

The Bell Inn, with its spacious yard, seems to have changed not at all since the last coach ceased to run this way ; even the legend ' Posting House ' still remains plainly painted on its olden walls, but where are the ' jolly post-boys ' and the ever ready post-horses ? Here we had an excellent meal in a delightfully cool old-fashioned room, our fare cold

roast beef and freshly gathered salad, with cheese to follow, washed down by good old English ale, clear and sparkling, a repast fit for a king; at least had I been a king then, I could not have wished for better cheer. Being on the road in the fresh, bracing country air all day long, one gets a healthy hearty appetite that rejoices in good plain living. Believe me, there is no better cure for dyspepsia than a prolonged driving tour. I speak from experience. *Verb. sap.* For those who are overworked, or for the nervous invalid, there is not in the whole Pharmacopœia so excellent a tonic as being out of doors all day long, driving about country. With the necessary constant change of scene and air such a journey involves, the mind too is always pleasantly occupied and the attention diverted from oneself to the ever-varying surroundings, and all without fatigue or worry of any kind, for has not the driving tourist ever a comfortable conveyance at his command? Not that he need ride all the way, but when tired with rambling afoot, at once he can resume his seat and take his ease.

Leaving our hotel we took a stroll around, which, however, did not occupy us long, for though a clean, sunny, neat little town, there are no buildings of interest in Saxmundham to engage the traveller's attention; the chief attraction of the place (if I may be allowed the term) is its refreshing naturalness, its aspect of homeliness and past-time calm. Some people (most, perhaps) might consider Saxmundham dull; it impressed me rather as restful. But, after all, the impression that a place produces depends much

upon the feeling of the person at that particular time. As we look on the world, so it looks back to us.

Eventually we found our way to the church. Ancient churches are (to those who can read their stone pages) histories in stone of the parish to which they belong; modern ones have still their history to make. Wandering about the churchyard in search of curious epitaphs or quaint inscriptions, we came upon a tombstone to a family of Dowsings, though whether they were in any way related to the famous Will Dowsing, of whose destructive doings I have more than once made mention, I cannot say. One lowly grass-grown grave (whose green covering showed that it was not of yesterday) we noticed was covered with freshly gathered wild flowers carefully arranged. This thoughtful attention of the humble poor to the memory of the remembered dead touched a chord of sympathy within us. Better thus 'to live in hearts we leave behind,' than to have the stateliest monument raised above forgotten mortality. When I die, would that some tender loving hand would strew my grave with flowers thus! But somehow churchyards are depressing, and moralising is wearisome; let us away.

Returning to our inn, whilst we were waiting in the ample yard watching our horses being put to, a commercial traveller driving by road came in, dust-stained but of cheerful countenance, evidently a man who did not make troubles for himself. He bade us a jovial good-day, which greeting we returned in the same spirit, on the principle of being friendly with

everyone we came across. Besides, was not our bag-man a wanderer by road like ourselves ? and the road, like the hunting-field, is very democratic, and well it is that it should be so. Even were we not ourselves once, in spite of the spruce phaeton, though somewhat mud-splashed on the occasion, taken for 'commercials' and duly shown into the 'commercial room,' and did not we spend a very 'jolly' evening in their company, and did not we find them thoughtfully considerate for each other, though it was rather embarrassing when they asked us in what 'line' we were, and for whom we travelled ? We tried our best, however, to act our part, and succeeded fairly well, though I fear we aroused the suspicion of one 'gentleman' who travelled in the 'stationery line,' and who would cross-question us in a rather unpleasantly close manner, though for all most good-humouredly, till, much to our relief, he was called to order by the chairman of the day, with 'No business, gentlemen, after supper, please.' We were duly grateful to that chairman !

We inquired of the commercial traveller who arrived just as we were about to depart from Saxmundham as to the accommodation we should be likely to find at Halesworth, where we intended to spend the night. To our query he replied, 'Oh, you'll be all right at Halesworth ; it is a town lighted with gas.' It was manifest in his opinion that whenever a town was lighted with gas, there the traveller would be sure of comfortable quarters, though personally we failed to see the necessary inference ; but his experience of country travel was greater than ours,

for he told us he had been 'on the road for thirty-six years come next spring.'

As we drove along we observed ahead of us dark threatening clouds collecting, and a distant growl of thunder warned us to prepare for a storm, so for the first time since we left London our mackintoshes were donned and the waterproof aprons got out, and all made ready for bad weather. The wind came and went in a fitful manner, now stirring the leaves of the trees, anon dropping away altogether, a few drops of warm rain fell as large as half-crowns, then a sudden gust swept by, swaying the branches of the elms that bounded our way, and giving us quite a shower-bath by the collected moisture blown down. Everything foreboded a heavy storm, and we drove along apace in hopes to gain some shelter before we experienced the worst of it. There was an ominous silence all around; the only sounds we heard were the clattering of our horses' hoofs and the crunching of our carriage wheels upon the road. But it is not always the expected that happens; suddenly a gleam of sunshine struggled forth from out of the grey sky above, then as suddenly disappeared, then another came, and vanished in like manner, till at last the sun gained the mastery, and the confusion of crested cumuli gradually melted away and left us once more in a world of warmth and sunshine. We afterwards found out that our hurrying on nearly brought us into the very thick of the downpour.

As the weather improved we moderated our pace. The few drops of rain already mentioned were



all we had ; we had simply just touched the fringe of the storm ; but the rapidity with which the thunder clouds sprang up and vanished was almost phenomenal.

Driving on we found ourselves all at once in the midst of a most charming little village, with neat cottages and pretty well-kept gardens on either side of the way. This romantic hamlet reminded us much of Shanklin, or rather of what Shanklin was before it became a watering-place, prosperous and commonplace. Yoxford is the name of this picturesque Suffolk village. Over the doorway of one of the rustic cottages here we read the following poetical effusion ; is it the beauty of the spot, I wonder, that causes even the sweep to proclaim his trade in verse ? Should not, however, a sweep know how to spell chimney ? But perhaps this is a mere matter of detail. Here then is the verse :—

James Majourm does live here,  
He sweeps the chimineys far and near ;  
If your chiminey get on fire,  
He'll put it out at your desire.

These poetical trade advertisements are not uncommon in rural England ; oftentimes, so we were told, these verses are written by the village school-master. Here is another specimen, exhibited in the shop window of a shoemaker, that we noted elsewhere :—

Good people all, I don't refuse  
To make or mend your boots and shoes ;  
My leather's good, my price is just,  
My work's the best, I give no trust.

And here is another from a village public house :—

You travel far, you travel near,  
'Tis here you get the best of beer ;  
You travel east, you travel west,  
You pass this house, you pass the best.

A mile out of Yoxford the roads and country gave signs of the storm that we had so fortunately escaped. 'You've had some rain here,' we remarked to a farmer who was leaning over a gate. 'Had some rain!' he replied indignantly; 'we've had a mighty lot, and all my hay out. Never see'd it come down heavier in my life, and it thundered terribly;' and the worthy man would hardly credit us when we said we had only experienced a few drops. 'Wherever was you?' said he, and we explained that we were a mile or so on the other side of Yoxford. 'Well, to be sure,' he exclaimed, 'it's just too bad; they wants rain bad in them parts; we don't want any more here at present—had far too much already. Never you try farming, sir; it's very trying to the temper, and it ain't profitable neither.' We duly sympathised with the farmer, though for the life of us we could not restrain a smile at his remarks; all the same we thanked him for his advice.

Our road now took us to Bramfield. Here our attention was at once arrested by a very quaint and unique church; so far, in all our home travels we had never seen any sacred structure the least resembling it; the building stood upon a rise, so that its peculiarities were manifest. In the first place the church had a round tower, and this was detached and standing at some distance apart from

the main structure ; moreover, the roof of the edifice was of thatch. We had never seen a church with a round tower before, or one with a thatched roof, though we afterwards found out that thatched churches and round towers were not uncommon in Norfolk, but I believe this church of Bramfield is unique in having its tower both of this form and detached.

We inquired of a lad if he knew where the clerk lived ; he said he did ; this was so far satisfactory, but indefinite. To a further query he stated that the clerk's house was down the street next door to a Mrs. Somebody's ; this was not much more to the point. However, we finally arranged that the lad should go and fetch the clerk for us, promising him a sixpence for himself on his return with that individual, whereupon he set off as fast as his legs would carry him, and soon came back with the clerk's son carrying the keys. I suppose you will go up the tower first,' said the boy ; 'people mostly do.' As we did not feel much inclined, without the prospect of some reward, to mount the many foot-worn steps, we asked if there were any view from the top. To this he answered, 'There is not much of a view, but people go up there to cut their names and the shape of their feet on the leads, and I thought perhaps as how you might like to cut yours ;' he even seemed surprised when we stated that we would forego that pleasure. Then we entered the ancient church, and were delightedly surprised at its beautiful and interesting interior, which we appreciated all the more because we were

totally unprepared for anything of the kind, our guide-book not even mentioning Bramfield. But it is ever so ; hand-books abound in information about well-known spots, but of noteworthy places out of the regular line of travel (as an almost invariable rule), you may search through their pages in vain for any description. How much the ordinary tourist misses who trusts solely to his guide-book !

Bramfield church possesses one of the finest carved oak rood-screens we have ever seen, and this in an out-of-the way village place of worship ! The carving of this is wonderful in its elaboration and in the exquisite rendering of the ornamental detail. As may be perceived by some remnants of colour still existing, this screen was all formerly painted and gilded, and a superb bit of art craftsmanship it must have been when in the glory of its perfect state ; some of the painted figures at its base of apostles and lesser saints still remain, though in a damaged condition ; I have seen pictures on rich men's walls attributed to old masters infinitely inferior in execution. It would be interesting to learn how it came that so beautiful a screen had place in so small and remote a village church.

But the screen was not the only thing of beauty we discovered here ; in the chancel we found one of the finest altar-tombs we have ever come upon, the finest not as to size or as to the wealth of ornamentation, but as to the wonderful beauty and rare merit of the sculpture. This monument is of pure white marble, and has the representation of a man above clad in full armour and kneeling ; beneath the

warrior is a woman of sweet expression reclining on a couch tenderly holding an infant in her arms. Who, we wondered, was the artist whose brain created this perfect design, and whose hand wrought the inanimate marble into the semblance of life? The figure of the woman almost seems to breathe, and there is a touching look of untold sadness in her face that haunted us for days long after. Flaxman might have been proud to have sculptured this; even that mighty genius never conceived a nobler work, nor did his chisel ever carve cold marble into a finer or more tender poem.

We asked our guide if he could give us anything of the history of this interesting monument; we could only get from him a set story that he had evidently learnt by heart and repeated in a profitless parrot-like fashion. As I happened to write down his remarks in my note-book on the spot, I am enabled to reproduce them here verbatim. 'He went to the wars; she thought him dead; she fretted herself to death; he was not killed, but returned home to find his wife and baby (that she had given birth to in his absence) dead; he died of grief two years after.' Who the 'he' was the boy knew not. 'We allus calls him he.' This was not satisfactory, nor very helpful in making matters clearer. We were unable to read the inscription below the monument, as the harmonium was carefully placed in front of it. It seemed to us that a much more suitable place might have been found for the instrument, but for some curious reason hard to understand, more often than not in country churches,

where there is anything of more than ordinary interest to be seen, it is sure to be in some such manner hidden away; a strange fact upon which I have already remarked. We made bold to move the obstructing harmonium, and learnt that the monument was to the memory of 'Arthur Coke Esqre. third sonne of Sir Edward Coke,' and to Elizabeth his wife who 'Christianly and peacefully departed this life the 14 day of November, Anno Dom̃i 1625'; the said Arthur Coke also 'Christianly and peacefully departed this life the 6 day of December, Anno Dom̃i 1629.'

Upon the north wall of the church we observed an old fresco much faded and damaged, but sufficiently clear to show the original design and intention. It represents four angels holding four cups round a cross; there are holes still remaining on the cross, and presumably there was here originally a crucifix, the angels holding the cups to catch the blood from the wounded Saviour. An extract from Dowsing's famous 'Journal' gives the following particulars as to his dealings with Bramfield church: 'A.D. 1643-4. 115. Bramfield. April 9th. Twenty-four Superstitious pictures, one Crucifix and picture of Christ, and twelve angels on the roof, and divers Jesus's in capital letters, and steps to be levelled by Sir Robert Brook.'

As we were leaving the church our guide pointed out to us a very curious epitaph, hidden, of course, beneath some matting; this reads as follows:—

M. S.  
Between the Remains of her Brother Edward  
and of her Husband Arthur  
Here lies the body of  
BRIDGETT APPLEWHAITE,  
Once Bridgett Nelson.

After the Fatiges of a Married Life  
Born by her with Incredible Patience  
For four years and three-quarters, bating three weeks,  
And after the enjoyment of the Glories Freedom  
Of an Easy and Unblemisht Widowhood  
For four years and upwards,  
She Resolved to run the Risk of a Second Marriage  
But Death Forbad the Banns  
Having with an apoplectick Dart  
The same instrument with wich he had formerly  
Dispatcht her mother,  
Touched the most Vital part of her Brain.

After a struggle for above sixty Hours  
With that Grand Enemy to life,  
But the certain and Merciful Friend to Old Age  
In Terrible Convulsions Plaintive Groans or  
Stupefying Sleep  
She Dyed on the 12 day of Sept.  
In y<sup>e</sup> year of our Lord 1737 and her own age 44.

Strolling down to our carriage we met the rector, with whom we chatted about his interesting church, and he told us that the rood-screen was the finest in the kingdom. Speaking of the beautiful monument to the warrior, wife, and child, he said that there was some ancient armour placed above it, but that he had had this removed to the rectory to be cleaned, as it was very rusty. We saw the armour in question hanging in the rectory hall and rusty still ; it consists of two helmets, a breast- and backplate. Let us hope that it will soon be back over the monument ;

then the children can look at it and wonder and romance about it, should the sermon be wearisome or overlong.

As we have found out in more than one instance during our journeyings, articles do get removed now and again from country churches (it may be for safer keeping), but unfortunately it frequently happens that they are not readily to be seen in their new homes, and when the articles are of interest this fact is most annoying to the traveller. Let me quote an instance in point. Certain relics of Charles I., consisting of his watch, the shirt worn by him on the morning of his execution, his silk drawers, and the sheet in which his body was wrapped, were bequeathed by the owner 'to the parish of Ashburnham for ever, to be exhibited as great curiosities.' These relics, which were formerly kept in the church and could be seen by any traveller in those parts, have been removed to Ashburnham House and are not now shown.



## CHAPTER IX.

Halesworth—Quaint Houses and Curious Carvings—Many Religions and little Religion—Verses by a local Schoolmaster—Provincial Papers—A singular Sign—Chat with a Miller—A lonely Church—Bungay—Commercial Travellers—An old Stronghold—A fine Prospect—Anglers—The Faculty of Artistic Sight—Mettingham Church and Castle—Trespassing—A Peal of Silver Bells—Barsham—The Reason of Round Church Towers—A Tradition—Haunted Houses.

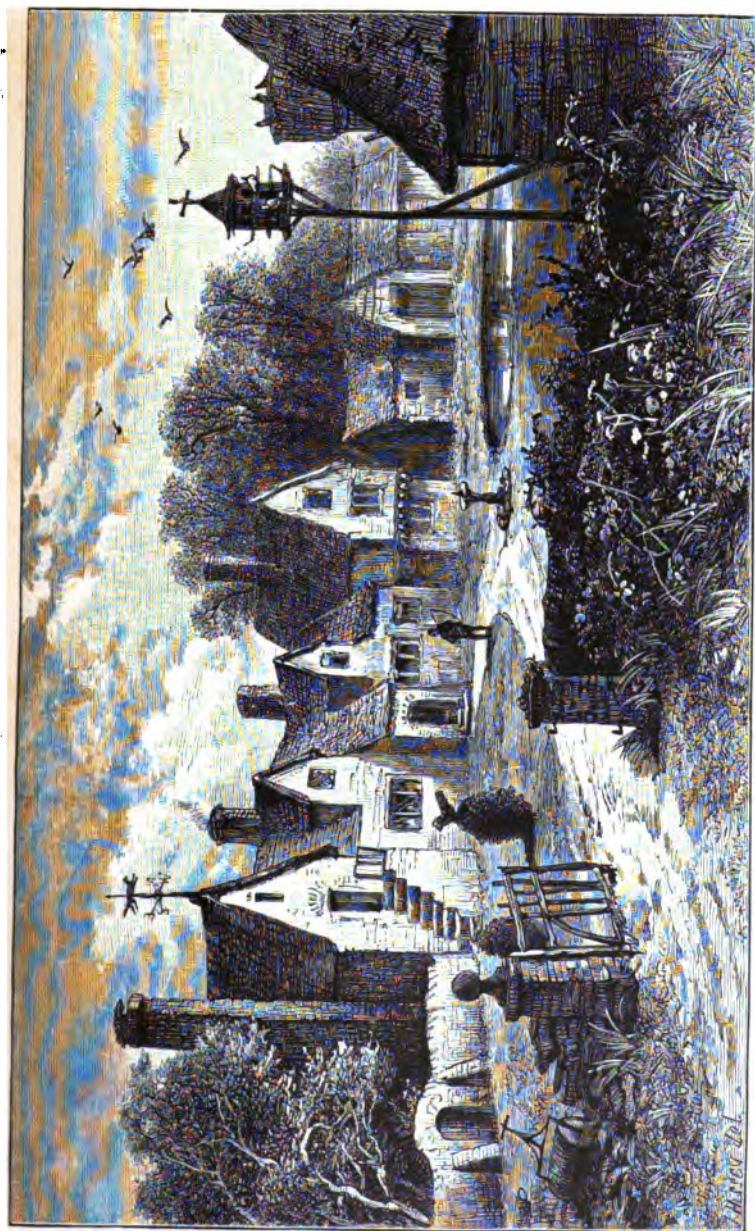
HALESWORTH, where we had arranged to spend the night, proved to be an old-fashioned town possessing some interesting and picturesque timbered houses of ancient date. The carvings upon many of these are quaint, and, though in some cases crude, always effective. One curious bit of wood sculpture in bold relief that has place over a shop in the main street, I have reproduced as a heading at the commencement of this book.

We found an excellent inn at Halesworth, the Angel to wit, the pleasant picturesque hall of which is quite a feature in the place. It was hung round when we were there with old sporting prints and was bright with growing flowers. On the table here we observed a great ram's horn mounted with a silver top, and charged, we found on lifting this, with snuff. This great snuff-box gave evidence of being in frequent use; we thought that the habit of taking

tobacco thus had gone entirely out of fashion. It would seem that such is not the case—at least in some parts of Suffolk.

Wandering about the town in the evening we came upon a contingent of the Salvation Army with banner flying and drum beating, and all the idle people of the place looking on. To be quite sure that we were not mistaken, we asked a person who was standing by us, who the people were, marching, singing, and shouting hymns so lustily, with much manifest satisfaction to themselves, but with a distressing disregard of all harmony. Our question was replied to with an indignant ‘Oh! them’s the Scribes and Pharisees; one’s only got to join them to be allowed to go about the streets and make as much noise as you like; of course it don’t matter how much you disturbs your neighbours. I calls it quite a fancy religion. March about and sing and shout; if quiet people (who work hard all the week and only have Sundays for a rest) don’t like it, well, they can do the other thing. We’ve a nice lot of religions in this ’ere country, it seems to me, and a precious little religion. ’Tain’t English, I says, this marching about with drums and flags; it’s a foreign fashion I’m told.’ By all of which we gathered that our Halesworth friend was not an enthusiastic admirer of the Salvation Army.

On returning to our hotel we found that it possessed a pleasant bowling-green, so we betook ourselves thither to indulge in a last pipe before retiring to rest. Here we discovered some verses painted over a summer house upon the classic game



A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY HOME



of bowls. We copied these with some trouble in the fading light. At the time we deemed them rather good ; probably it was that we were in a mood to be easily pleased, for on reading them over on our return home, we quite reversed our first opinion. The landlady told us that they had been written by the village schoolmaster in 1849, and said moreover that they were considered very clever, many people having copied them. It would seem that after all 'a prophet has' sometimes 'honour in his own country.'

We had not the green all to ourselves ; there was a townsman there smoking a churchwarden contentedly, who watched the copying of the verses with evident interest. He was manifestly, as the Americans express it, 'spoiling for a gossip.' At last he ventured to address me, and having broken the ice gave me the full benefit of his opinions. 'You be a copying them verses, I see, sir ; they be much admired, that they be. I never read no poetry I likes better, that I never did. He must have been a great scholard who wrote them, that he must. The lots of people as I've seen a copying those lines, to be sure ! You see, sir, I ain't had no grand schooling, there wern't no school boards in my time, but I can read, and I knows what I likes.' And so the remarks followed each other apace, concluding with 'Supposes you bain't a poet, bees you, sir ?' I smilingly replied that I had never written a line of poetry in my life. 'Ah, sir,' he continued, 'it takes a clever man to write poetry, that it do.' Manifestly he thought that I was not clever

enough, which, though true, was hardly flattering. Having finished my copying and my pipe, I bade my companion 'good night' and beat a hasty retreat indoors, for he appeared to be about to recommence his remarks on poets and poetry, and 'one can have too much even of a good thing.'

One meets at times very curious characters at these country inns, and many an interesting evening have I spent in the bar of such, chatting with and studying the peculiarities of the rural folk, hearing their opinions, political and otherwise, and listening to the mild scandal of the neighbourhood.

Perhaps, as I have said so much about the verses in the bowling-green of the Angel at Halesworth, I may have raised the curiosity of my readers to know what they are like. I have therefore transcribed them below; should they not care for the schoolmaster's poetry, they have full licence to skip it. You may be obliged to listen to a dull sermon or an uninteresting lecture; an author, fortunately, however, cannot compel you to read any of his work unless you are so minded, and for this very reason I often prefer printed books to spoken lectures. Books never weary me; when they become tedious I simply shut them up. But I am wandering; here are the verses:—

Life, like the game of bowls, is but an end,  
Which to play well this moral verse attend.  
Throw not your bowl too rashly from your hand,  
First let its course by reason's eye be plann'd,  
Lest it roll useless o'er the verdant plain,  
Thus sanguine life is often spent in vain.

Bowling too short you but obstruct the green,  
Like those who loiter on life's public scene.

Know well your bias : here the moral school  
Scarce needs a comment on the bowling rule.  
Play not too straight : in life observe the same,  
The narrow-minded often miss their aim.

Nor yet too wide ; with caution eye your cast ;  
Use not extent of green or life to waste.  
One bowling trick avoid in moral play,  
Ah ! never block your neighbour's way.  
These rules observed, a man may play his game  
On this small spot or through the world with fame.

But to return to the characters one comes upon now and again at country inns, the tradesmen of the place generally assemble in the bar in the evening ; it is their club, and they chat and argue over all matters, from the affairs of the state down to the weather ; on market days you may meet with a few farmers who have stayed on to have a little gossip by way of change. In such gatherings politics seem to be a standing topic, always available when other matters fail ; a local cricket match, a wedding, or a death, however, is by far the favourite subject for discussion. Thus a quiet listener may gather a good deal of local information in no other way obtainable. In one case we heard a heated argument as to the respective advantages of free trade and fair trade. During the discussion one of the disputants 'scored' with the following anecdote, though what authority he had for his statement I know not ; possibly he evolved it from his inner consciousness. 'The other day the Spanish minister of finance asked a Protectionist deputation why he should be compelled to purchase his clothes in Spain when he could get them better and cheaper in England. The deputation replied, why should

they be expected to put up with him as a finance minister, when they could get a better and cheaper one in England?' The political arguments are generally very heated, but not convincing, each party at the end retaining firmer than ever, it seemed to us, his own opinion, but on the whole they are conducted very good-naturedly, and with as much good sense or more than is shown in Parliament. Whatever the discussion may be, the listener may gather much amusement from it, if not profit. There are worse ways of spending an idle evening than in the bar of a country inn; there you may learn the genuine opinion of the country people, freely given.

Not only from the rural folk we came across at country inns did we get entertainment, but the odd copies of local papers, old numbers of magazines, and ancient bound volumes that we discovered in our sitting-rooms afforded us frequent matter for thought and amusement. The following extract that I copied verbatim from a provincial newspaper may be given as an example of the curious paragraphs that appear now and again in these prints. 'At the late church restoration one of the items charged by the painter was: "To mending the Commandments, altering the Belief, and making a new Lord's Prayer, 4*l.* 10*s.*"' From an old magazine bearing the strange title of 'The Post Angel, or the Athenian Mercury,' published in 1701, we gleaned some wonderful information in the 'Answers to Correspondents.' Who edited these, I wonder? 'Why,' asks some one, 'does the Needle in the Sea-Compass always turn to the North?' The reply given is:



‘The most received opinion is, that there is under our North Pole a huge black Rock, from under which the Ocean issueth forth in four currents answerable to the four corners of the earth, or four winds; which rock is thought to be all of a Loadstone; so that by a kind of Affinity, it draweth all such like stones or other metals touched by them towards it.’ Another querist asks why the sea is salt, and is answered in this wise: ‘The reason of it is, when the Sun by whose beams the more thin and subtle parts are exhal’d in vapours, the more gross and terrestrial parts are left behind and become adult or salt. This is evident, in that the Southern seas are salter, and that more in summer, than others are; and therefore it is that the deeper the water the fresher it is, the sun having the most power at the top.’ Now and again local antiquaries write to the country papers, and their letters are oftentimes of real interest. Here is a copy of a time-table of the first passenger railway in the world that we unearthed from an old newspaper, and I think it is well worth preserving as a great curiosity. Possibly this is one of the earliest, if not the very earliest Railway time-table ever printed; it is of the old Liverpool and Manchester line, on which it will be remembered Stephenson ran his famous locomotive the ‘Rocket.’ It will be observed that the trains were of first and second class only, and travelled separately, also that the time of starting is given though not the hour of arrival, it merely being stated that the ‘first class carriages usually accomplish the distance under two hours.’

## RAILWAY TIME TABLE for 1830.

## LIVERPOOL AND MANCHESTER RAILWAY.

*Times of Departure**Both from Liverpool and Manchester.*

First Class, fare 5s. <i>od.</i>	Second Class, fare 3s. 6d.
Seven o'clock morning.	Eight o'clock morning.
Ten „ ditto.	Half-past two afternoon.
One „ afternoon.	
Half-past four ditto.	

For the convenience of merchants and others, the first class evening train of carriages does not leave Manchester on *Tuesdays* and *Saturdays* until half-past five o'clock. The journey is usually accomplished by the first class carriages under two hours. In addition to the above trains, it is intended to add three or four more departures daily. The company have commenced carrying goods of all kinds on their Railway.

From Halesworth we drove to Bungay through a sparsely populated but very beautiful country, with wide prospects ever and again of woods and cultivated plains. A little more than a mile on our way, close by the fork of two roads, we came to a little public house with a very curious sign, over which was written 'The Triple Plea.' Of the many signs that we had noticed this was a fresh one to us. On the board was a painted representation of three men, holding a discussion upon a figure on the ground; looking on was the devil, very badly drawn and as red as paint could make him. The meaning of this curious sign we could not make out, and the landlady of whom we sought information replied 'she knew nought about it,' and the country boors who were drinking in the tap-room replied to the same effect. One rather less drunk than the others said certainly that 'it were meant for three men and

the devil,' which did not much help to enlighten us.

The country now became level; 'wide fields of breezy grass' were on either side of us, a green world stretching far away, growing from green to grey, and grey to hazy blue on the long circling line of the horizon. Here and there were scattered pleasant-looking farmsteads with stacks and sheltering trees around. One farmhouse we passed had been rebuilt, but strangely enough the ancient chimneys of a former structure were retained, a curious admixture of the new and the old. Presently, as we journeyed on, we came to an old friend, a windmill by the roadside busily at work, with the miller's home close by. We pulled up here to make a sketch of this.

The windmills of Eastern England generally differ from those of hilly counties in being built taller, in order to obtain the necessary wind power clear of trees. Indeed, it is strange how the build of windmills varies in different parts of the country. A tall Suffolk or Norfolk mill with its great spreading sails would soon be strained and useless on the exposed South Downs. But this roadside windmill which we stopped to sketch, for some reason hard to understand, was not a tall one; indeed, its sails, as they swept round and round with a great swish, swish, swish, came so close to the ground as almost to make us feel uncomfortable. A blow from one of those mighty arms would have put a sudden end to our outing.

'It is a picturesque old building,' we remarked

to the miller by way of saying something, and as a change from the everlasting topic of the weather ; and writing of this latter we have found that a miller's idea of good weather does not always coincide with our own. A wet blowy day that sets his sails in rapid motion is better weather by far to him than a day of sunshine and gentle airs. Different people see the world from different standpoints. Again, in Wales we made a mistake in saying to an old miller, whose ancient water-wheel we were sketching, 'What a gloriously fine summer we are having! Hope it will continue.' To which civil remark we received a wholly unexpected rejoinder : 'It's all very well for you artist chaps to call it glorious weather ; I calls it wretched. Ain't rained anything worth speaking about for nearly a month, and I'm short of water. How am I to get a living if I can't work?' But to return to our Suffolk miller, said he in answer to us, 'She may be picturesque or she may not, but she ain't nearly as useful as she might be.' 'How's that?' we asked. 'Well, you see, sir, she's far too low. The trees around have grown up since she were built, and we lose a lot of wind by them. It's not so much matter in the winter time, but in the summer the foliage do make a lot of difference. She ain't much use on to do work in the summer unless we has a good stiff breeze.' And upon the principle that 'beauty is as beauty does' it was clear that the miller did not consider his mill beautiful, and manifestly would rather have had it more useful and less picturesque ; and after all he was right, for is not the first business of a windmill to grind corn?

After a time the stretch of level country came to an end, and our road was once more pleasantly undulating. The only building of interest on the way was an old and lonely country church, standing by itself, villageless, on rising ground. Where the congregation came from was a puzzle to us; but though the living inhabitants seem few and far between, its crowded God's Acre tells of many bygone generations of worshippers sleeping there. Indeed, the very churchyard is raised considerably above the level of the land around, owing, presumably, to the interments of centuries. A sad and mournful churchyard, striking a solemn note strangely out of harmony with the smiling sunlit landscape, it seemed as though it had the gathered gloom of ages upon it. The brightness of the day served but to emphasise the grey desolation of the ancient fane, and to add an additional melancholy to its neglected grass-grown graves. We were glad to drive on.

A few miles more brought us to Bungay, a sleepy, rambling old town, picturesque and romantic, possessing many quaint houses of ancient date—some with curious carvings thereon—boasting also of a seventeenth-century market-cross and a ruined castle set on a height overlooking a winding river and a far-spreading wooded country. Surely such a town deserves the term romantic, although it is only in Suffolk and not somewhere abroad difficult of access?

As we drove into the place we noticed two inns, evidently old coaching hostleries. Strangely enough, though both possessed their ancient and finely iron-

wrought sign-supports, neither support retained its signboard. We patronised the one beneath the castle walls, and, entering, asked if we could have some lunch. Tourists and travellers (other than 'commercial') are manifestly rare in this part of England, for the civil landlady actually appeared taken slightly aback at our simple request. 'We've only a commercial room,' she replied, 'and there is a dinner just going in there, if you don't mind joining it; otherwise I am sorry that you will have to wait till it's over.' We were hungry, and we said that we would not mind 'joining it,' so we were shown into the commercial room, where we found a sumptuous repast spread, with champagne on the table, and a chairman presiding. We felt a little strange at first, as we did not understand commercial etiquette. We understood a good deal more of it after that dinner. It appears that one of the oldest travellers presides, and is the 'chairman for the day.' As each party comes in he says, 'Gentlemen, permit me to join you,' and he 'joins' after the chairman replies, 'Certainly, sir; most pleased to have your company.' Then after a time, in our case, the chairman remarked, 'This is a free house, I believe, gentlemen. Will you order what wine you please?' Then, as each individual took his first glass, he turned to the head of the table, and said, 'Your health, Mr. President; gentlemen all,' and we felt rather like a fish out of water, for in our ignorance we had actually sat down to table without even begging permission; we had taken our ale (wine we had not dreamt of ordering) without drink-

ing to the health of the president and 'gentlemen all.' We had an excellent dinner, the best we had had on the way, so far, and this over, whilst the diners sipped their wine—(it was Saturday, and the 'commercials' were taking a half-day's rest after their week's work)—we listened to many a joke, and came to the conclusion that a commercial traveller's life was rather a 'jolly' one. But possibly we saw only the bright side of it, for one of the company said to us, upon our remarking that we thought they must be very prosperous to indulge in such good fare and wine, 'You see, sir, it's our holiday. We work hard all the week, and Saturday afternoons we forget business'—which they seemed to do very thoroughly, and, whatever else they did, they certainly did not 'talk shop.'

We remained only a short time in the company of the 'commercials,' and leaving them we strolled out to take a leisurely inspection of the quaint old town. We first wended our way to the ruined castle, which is situated on an eminence at the back of the hotel. This old feudal stronghold (in its day considered impregnable) stands upon a bold height overlooking the fertile valley of the Waveney. The dignified and commanding situation of this ancient castle is more what one would expect to find in the hilly north country than in the peaceful, pastoral land of Suffolk. It is now very ruinous, and consists only of some battered walls and the remains of two round towers. This formidable stronghold was built (we discovered in hunting the history of it up) by one Roger Bigod, who took part with

the rebels against Henry III., for which he was summoned to the monarch's presence.

The King he sent for Bigod bold  
In Essex where he lay,  
But Lord Bigod laughed at his poursuivant  
And stoutly thus did say :  
' Were I in my castle of Bungay,  
Upon the river of Waveney,  
I would ne care for the King of Cockney.'

The prospect from the castle walls is very fine. A green and wooded country stretches all around, through which the Waveney winds like a silver ribbon. A grand panorama was before us ; a silent world asleep in the midday sunshine, a vast far-spreading landscape across which mighty cloud-shadows swept in silent motion. Whilst we were gazing delightedly upon all the fair prospect the inevitable guide turned up, as we half feared he would, in the shape of a ragged boy. ' Would you like to see the dungeons ? ' said he ; ' they have only just been discovered.' So we were led away and shown some dark places underground, the expected tip was given, and we were once more left in peace, much to our gratification. A once lordly castle turned into a sort of peepshow ! *Sic transit gloria mundi !* What would stern Bigod the Bold have thought of his stately fortress doing duty as a nineteenth-century showplace ? Enough to make the proud warrior turn in his grave.

Descending into the town, we were much interested in some of the quaint carvings upon the ancient houses. The most curious of these was one with the representation of men and animals fighting ;



in this we observed a man struggling with two dragons, or what we presumed to be such. The town possesses two fine old churches, which are very interesting. The largest seems to have been larger still at one time, for the ancient chancel is still in ruins, though now built off from the main edifice ; the other church is notable for its round tower, which is strangely capped with an octagonal top of flints.

Finding our way down to the river we came upon two men fishing. We made bold to ask them what sport they were having, and were somewhat amused at the reply we received to the effect that they had caught nothing as yet, 'but we've only been out since nine.' It was then past two o'clock. What patience these anglers have ! I have known followers of the gentle craft in wild Wales start out early in the morning of a pouring-wet day, and return home late in the evening to the little inn at which we were staying, drenched through to the skin, with a bare half-dozen of tiny trout in their creel, but smiling contentedly, ay, and starting off betimes next morning under precisely the same conditions, and ending their wet outing with much the same result both as to sport and enjoyment. There seems to me to be one advantage the angler out for a holiday has : wet weather little affects him, if, indeed, it does not sometimes actually raise his spirits. Fancy the ordinary tourist with a few days to spare making merry under such depressing conditions ! Sometimes I have felt almost inclined to turn fisherman myself, and learn the secret of the angler's content.

Returning to our inn we ordered the horses to be put to, and found one of the commercial travellers with whom we had dined just about to drive out of the courtyard. We noticed that he had a camera-stand strapped to his conveyance, and he told us that he did a little photography when on the road. 'My round takes me three weeks,' said he, 'and whenever I see a pretty bit on the way I just pull up and take it. I've got quite a collection of views that I have secured when on my rounds. I used to find it dull and monotonous at times, driving all alone; since I've got a camera, however, I take an interest in scenery, and being always on the lookout for picturesque peeps, I don't feel half so dull now as formerly.' Landscape photography, as well as sketching, makes one appreciate and understand the beauties of Nature more. In searching for subjects the faculty of artistic sight is more or less aroused, and in time the eye becomes trained to see unexpected beauties where before it only beheld trees and fields.

A freshening west wind and gathering grey clouds betokened rain as we left Bungay. Masses of dun-coloured vapour, laden and bulging with moisture, were sweeping across the sky; now the sun came out cheerily for a moment, and anon all the landscape was in gloomy shade. Just as we reached the pretty hamlet of Mettingham down came the rain in real earnest, and we were glad to drive under the shelter of some wide-branching elms. The worst of the shower over, we rambled up to the picturesque church which stands by the

roadside. The tower of this is round, but we had become so accustomed to round church towers that we no longer regarded these with the special interest of novelty. We noticed here the Saxon doorway with a quaint figure above it, and caught a glimpse through one of the windows of a curiously carved font. Then a mile or more of pleasant tree-bordered lane took us to Mettingham Castle. A picturesque, ivy-covered ruin this, which, unless I greatly mistake, is an old friend of ours—in pictures. It is strange how, in driving across country, you will now and again come upon a place or an old building that seems perfectly familiar to you, although you have never been in that part of the world before ; but the artist has been there, and has already revealed its beauties to you in his paintings.

Only the entrance gateway of the castle is to be seen from the road, with a peep of the weed-grown moat, spanned now by a stone bridge. There was nobody about ; so, taking our sketch-book with us, we wandered over the ancient ruin. In what was the former courtyard we found a modern brick homestead in the so-called Queen Anne style, and a very charming home it was, snugly contained within the castle walls ; the bright cheerful look of the trim new building, with its tidy gay flower garden, contrasted strangely and effectively with the dark, rugged, and weather-stained remains of the old stronghold. As we were sketching, some one came up to us and asked whether we knew that we were trespassing ; we replied that we feared we were, and apologised for our intrusion, explaining that as we could see no

one about of whom to ask permission, we had invited ourselves into the ruins, and trusted that we were doing no harm in making a sketch of them. 'A soft answer turneth away wrath;' we soon made friends with the man in authority who came intent on warning us away, and had a long and interesting conversation with him, which ended in our obtaining permission to ramble about wherever we liked. During our chat we learnt that some years ago a peal of six bells, all of real silver, was found whilst draining a portion of the moat, which bells were supposed to have belonged to the chapel of the castle. I am afraid that during our wanderings we have at different times been tempted to do a good deal of trespassing, but in every case, upon apologising and explaining our purpose, we have been treated not only with civility but now and again even with unexpected courtesy. Upon one occasion a gentleman, in whose park we had wandered regardless of notice boards, ended his remonstrance against our trespass by actually asking us into his house to lunch! Possibly there may be some surly landlords, but so far I have not come even upon a single example. I can only speak of people as I find them. A little civility is an excellent passport to take with you on a tour; civility begets civility—and it costs nothing.

Having secured one or two additional sketches for our ever-growing collection, we remounted the phaeton and once more proceeded on our way. The rain, which had held off for a time, now commenced in earnest, but we were prepared for it, and

in spite of the wet enjoyed our drive. Passing through Barsham we stopped to see its curious and interesting old church ; this has a quaint east window of an uncommon lozenge-shaped pattern, the roof is of homely thatch, except the nave, the tower here is round, as is the prevailing fashion in Norfolk. Why, I wonder, are Norfolk church towers so generally of this singular form ? I have not been able to learn a plausible reason yet for this strange departure from what prevails elsewhere in England ; the most generally accepted theory appears to be that they were thus built for the sake of economy, as in a round tower there is a saving in masonry and in the cutting of corner stones. But surely there must be a more satisfactory reason than this, for the saving in labour is not so very great after all, and we find round towers attached to churches that are glorious examples of architecture ; and again, some of these round towers show no signs of the saving of labour or expense, being decorated with elaborate patterns in flint and stone panelling, sometimes even, as in the case of the Holy Trinity at Bungay, having the further addition of carved stone shields. We learnt from a clergyman we met during our wanderings that there is a tradition amongst the country people that these round towers were the casing of wells in the time of the flood, and that the land around had been washed away, leaving the circular stonework standing ! One picks up many curious traditions and quaint fancies driving leisurely about country, conversing with those one comes across in out-of-the-way spots. It has astonished us to find what a sturdy

old-fashioned belief is still retained by rural folk in ghosts; more than one desirable house have we had pointed out to us that has stood for long years, tenantless, and all because such bear the evil reputation of being haunted. Truly a house with a family ghost attached is not a profitable possession in the country. But are country uneducated rural folk alone in their superstitions? I know certain people who firmly believe in spirit-rapping, and in a large and prosperous provincial town I am acquainted with an excellent residence, desirable in every respect, but which always stands empty simply because it is said to be haunted. There is a deal of superstition still existing in the world, and amongst a class in which one would hardly expect to find it. Indeed I am not sure if I am wholly free from it myself, for I know a certain room in an old country house with its dark oak-panelled walls and ancient four-poster, seeming so ghostlike and eerie that nothing would induce me to sleep therein.

## CHAPTER X.

Wet Weather—Inn full—Beccles—A Fortunate Town—The Wave-  
ney Valley—Thatched Churches—Haddiscoe—A Dutchlike  
Landscape—St. Olave's—A Riverside Hotel—Painters and  
Scenery—Fritton Church and Broad—A Quiet Spot—Belated—  
Old Yarmouth Houses and Rows—A Good-natured Landlord—  
'Holy Stones.'

IT was raining hard as we drove into Beccles, but in spite of the downpour the streets were crowded, for it was market-day. We made the best of our way to the King's Head, the old coaching hostelry, and arriving there it was that we had our first and only disagreeable experience of the journey. The inn chanced to be crowded with farmers, a market dinner was on, but unfortunately, not only the inn but the stables likewise were filled to their utmost capacity, and somewhat more, horses being packed together like sardines in a box. Both entrances to the courtyard were blocked up entirely with a curious collection of conveyances, so that it was impossible for us to drive in, and even had we been able to do this, there was positively no place for our tired horses. Here was a pretty state of affairs, neither accommodation for man nor beast! There was absolutely nothing for it but to wait about in the rain till there should be room for us, and when that would be how could we tell? for doubtless

many of the farmers themselves were wisely waiting in comfortable shelter, in the hope that the weather might improve. Wet, tired, and hungry as we were, anxious above all to rest our hard-worked horses, could anything be more provoking or temper-trying than this depressing and wholly unforeseen *contre-temps*? I am proud to say that we kept our tempers; there was no good losing them. The unfortunate combination of circumstances was nobody's fault. The landlord could not help his inn being full, nor was he answerable for the rain. But we made a note that it was not advisable to arrive at a strange town (without previously securing accommodation) upon a market-day; even in fine weather the inns are always crowded at such times, and the streets likewise often blocked with cattle. We made diligent inquiry afterwards as to the market-days of the towns we visited, so that when it was a market-day we took the precaution of arriving late, when the majority of the farmers had left for their homes.

I must confess that as we drove slowly up and down the crowded main street of the town, wearily waiting in the wet till we could be taken in, we voted driving tours a failure; but once comfortably housed in the evening over our pipe and glass of 'toddy' we readily withdrew our vote of censure and thought no more of our temporary discomfort.

At last we managed to drive the phaeton under the shelter of the archway of the King's Head, and here we had to unharness the horses without the ostler's help, and stable our cattle as best we could for the time, the mud-stained phaeton being left



standing in the roadway till the number of conveyances in the courtyard thinned. I must say that the good-natured landlord did all he could for us, and he was so manifestly chagrined at our troubles that we actually felt more sorry for him than for ourselves.

The courtyard of the King's Head at Beccles is roofed over with glass, making it into a comfortable lounge ; a pleasant fashion that prevails in the hostleries of Suffolk. This enclosed space was musical with the songs of caged birds, green with growing plants, and gay with flowers ; ' mine host ' evidently had a soul for beauty as well as a talent for hotel-keeping. As a rule, nowadays the one idea of a business man is to make money quickly, unmindful of his commonplace commercial surroundings. What a much pleasanter spot the world would be to live in were men only a little less eager to become rich, if they would put some enjoyment into the present instead of trusting to a far future that may never come ! Fancy a lawyer's office artistic, a baker's shop delightful to look upon, or a stately factory ! Yet such things might be, and life would be all the better and brighter if the ' might be ' could be practically realised. And if, even in the making of the land beautiful, money became more dispersed among the many, would the world be any the worse if big fortunes were fewer and workhouses less well filled ? Truly the wealthy man can escape from much of the ugliness of our crowded cities, he can retire to his own home surrounded by pictures and all that is beautiful and pleasant to look upon ; but the rich are so few and the poor so many.

The inhabitants of Beccles are singularly fortunate in one respect, for the town possesses extensive estates which preclude the necessity for borough rates, as the costs of paving, highways, sewerage, police, and lighting are paid from funds arising from this source. The estate in question consists of nearly a thousand acres of rich marshland pasturage. Fancy living in a town without rates ! I would the town I lived in were rateless !

Beccles, like Bungay, is a pleasantly situated and picturesque place. It has too a certain indescribable look of prosperity ; not the prosperity that breaks out in stucco shops and plate glass, that asserts itself in cheap and flimsy villas, or desirable mansions badly built, all show and sham, but a quiet sufficient prosperity that is suggestive of contented abiding and well-being.

Beccles truly does not possess a castle set on a height like Bungay, but it boasts of a grand old church that stands on a commanding eminence, from which there is, as our American cousins would express it, a 'superb prospect' over the vast low-lying valley of the Waveney; the eye can trace from thence the far winding course of the little river glistening for miles in the green level marshes. The fine tower of this church stands detached at some distance from the main building ; it is a splendid specimen of masonry. Unfortunately, it was not quite finished by the ancient builders, and it has remained unfinished, as they left it in the sixteenth century, to this day. Perhaps, however, after all there is not so much to grieve about in its being un-

completed, for if it is not so grand as it would have been in its perfect state, it is undoubtedly more picturesque.

Of the past history of Beccles I must confess total ignorance. We were content to take the place as we found it, nor have I since troubled to look its past record up in books, but from the many names of streets ending in 'gate' we presumed that it must once have been a fortified and walled town. There is Ballygate Street, Blyburgate Street, Ingate Street, Northgate Street, Smallgate Street, and possibly others that we failed to note.

The market-place at Beccles is quite foreign-looking ; indeed, to use an Irish expression, I think that I may say it is more so than many continental ones. The wide irregular market square, with its surroundings of high-gabled and irregular-roofed houses, having the ancient church and great grey tower for a background, forms a charming picture. Prout would have gloried in sketching it: Were it not for the names on the shops around, and for the people, who are too pronouncedly English and wanting in picturesqueness, Beccles as viewed thus might be a town in Normandy.

But there is another even more effective peep of the place. As seen from the riverside below, from near to the first bridge that crosses the Waveney, on the road to Yarmouth, the town of Beccles makes a most romantic picture, well composed and rich in colour. I wonder whether any artist has ever yet come and painted this. Over all stands the grey church tower, dominating the whole town, the very

expression in stone of the ancient ecclesiastical supremacy; gathered around this are the uneven-roofed red-tiled houses, then comes a mingling of quaint waterside buildings, trees, and different sorts of sailing craft (from the giant of Norfolk rivers, a trading wherry, to a diminutive canoe); a bright green meadow constitutes the foreground. The changeful outlines of the buildings, the contrasting colours of the red roofs with the solemn grey of the church, and the pale blue smoke losing itself in a mystery of half-tints, the grey and green of the outbuildings and riverside trees, the gleaming and sparkling of the water, and the many hues of the various craft idly afloat thereon, with the fresh green of the foreground meadow, made a subject worthy of the brush of Turner.

So boldly does the church uprise above the clustering houses, with such a masterful air does it assert its dignity, that Beccles seems more like a miniature cathedral city than a little-known provincial town. There is one thing about these country towns: as a rule, when they possess buildings of merit, they are not dwarfed as in London by high houses close around; space also permits the observer to see their edifices at a proper distance, and therefore the beauty of their proportions can be understood and rightly appreciated. Nor is this all, for the sunshine not being cut off from them, they have the supreme advantage of the full relief of light and shade, without which even the finest elevation loses half its effect from the want of contrast and consequent lack of emphasis in the architectural details.

Out of Beccles our road took us over the flat

marshlands that form the Waveney valley. The land here is but about two feet above the water level, and we could not but wonder how it was drained at all, but we wondered a great deal more further on our journey. When we found some of the dykes embanked above the land with large craft with great spreading sails thereon, voyaging high above dry ground, it seemed as though the general order of things and laws of nature had been set at defiance. A strange country this vast fenland, reclaimed by the tireless toil of centuries and only retained by constant watchfulness, and now that the land does not pay to cultivate, at least so the farmers say, the question arises, will this ceaseless struggle to maintain it be kept up?

Reaching the end of the marshlands, we noticed a picturesque inn, the Swan by name, built in 1734, as is shown by the iron figures upon its walls. The Swan, we have noted, is as favourite a title for riverside inns as is the Ship for seaport publics and the Red Lion or King's Head for the chief hotels in market towns. There is more in the names of such places than at first meets the eye.

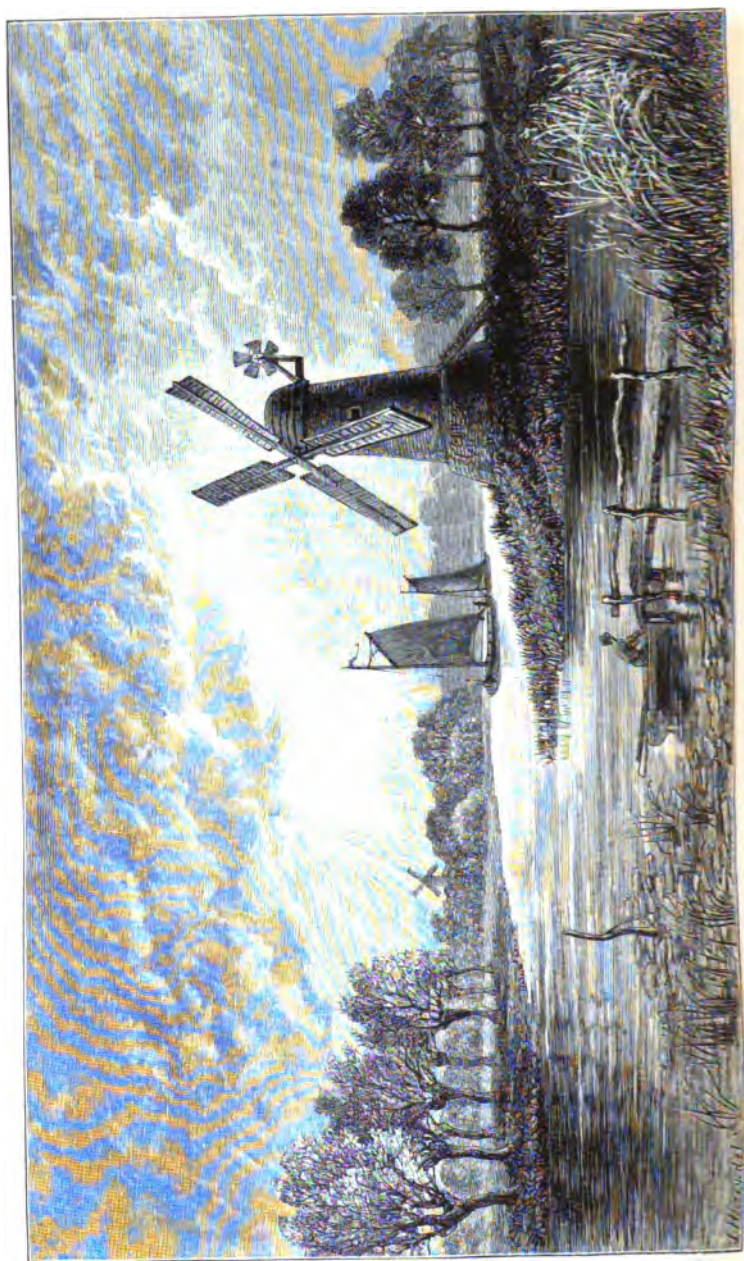
A few miles of pretty country brought us to the hamlet of Haddiscoe, the very interesting church of which is set on a height that seems almost a hill in this flat land. This edifice contains much fine Norman work, noticeably the exceedingly beautiful north doorway; in a niche above this is a very curious carved image of a man, seated in a chair, holding up both his hands. The tower (round as usual) is unusual in one respect, in that it is embattled and has

some uncommon windows. The roof is of lead, not thatched, as so many of the country churches are in these parts. I wonder what is the reason of this primitive thatch covering for a place of worship, and why it so prevails hereabouts, and even more in Norfolk. Is it that the ancient leaden roofs were stripped off by the enthusiastic Puritan villagers and melted into bullets for the Parliamentary forces, and that the roofs were thereupon thatched, as the readiest way of preserving the building for a time, and, once being thatched (in this conservative corner of England), the thatch has been renewed again and again, and seems from long custom, in rural eyes, to be quite the proper thing, and so it has remained until this day?

The country now became flat once more, with sluggish rivers; our road was bounded by pollards, a great level sea of land stretched far away on either side of us. The landscape was characteristically flat, nothing higher for leagues than a church tower or a tall poplar tree; the sky above was more spacious than the one we were accustomed to, a vast dome of cloud-flecked blue extending from horizon to horizon. I do not wonder that it was a difficult task to convince the famous Dutchman that the world was really round; in his country it certainly does appear above all things flat.

The most noticeable things in the prospect are the many windmills, some at work, others at rest, some white in the sunshine, others showing dark against the silvery sky. I do not think that I have ever before seen so large a number of windmills at







the same time. We presumed that the majority of these were employed in raising water from the low lands into the drainage dykes ; they could not surely be all for grinding corn. From the mills close at hand through those in the middle distance to the others space-diminished far away, it was a striking study in vanishing perspective. The whole scene was wonderfully Dutchlike ; it was in truth an English Holland that we were travelling through, a rich, moist, green land, intersected with dykes, dotted with frequent windmills, and made cheerful by red-roofed homes. A land of slothful rivers with lazy craft thereon ; a dreamy land where people are given to live long, make haste slowly, and grow neither very poor nor very rich.

Crossing a river, a railway, and a great straight dyke one after the other, we came to St. Olave's, where once there stood a stately priory, famous for its charity.

When yonder broken arch was whole,  
'Twas there was dealt the weekly dole ;  
So fleets the world's uncertain span,  
Nor zeal for God nor love to man  
Gives mortal monuments a date  
Beyond the powers of time and fate.

Close by the waterside here we espied the Bell Inn, an ancient hostel, picturesque and homely. It looked like an angler's resort, and doubtless many a follower of the 'gentle craft' has made this primitive house his quarters for a time, and I trust that they one and all have had good sport. An artist in search of 'fresh woods and pastures new' might do worse than bring his easel hither ; certainly there is no lack

of good picture-making material round about, and the scenery has the stamp of a sturdy individuality. Moreover, a pertinent moreover, it has not been sketched, painted, and photographed endlessly from every available point of view, and has therefore the desirable quality of freshness.

Writing of painting from nature, on looking over my sketch-books (the outcome of many tours), I have been struck by the changeful characteristics of the scenery represented therein. I think now, that on seeing a faithful sketch I could tell at a glance whether it was intended for a scene in Wales, or Cumberland, or Yorkshire, or Devonshire, and so forth, so individual and pronounced in reality is the English landscape, as varied as it is beautiful. And it seems to me that frequently certain scenery has stamped its individuality upon the painter, who has lived amongst it, loved it, and drawn it, putting his whole soul into his work. It can only be painted best in one way ; he discovers this way and so paints it. It is the scenery that impresses its character upon the painter's mind, and makes what we are pleased to call his style. For instance, in some parts of North Wales I am at once reminded of David Cox ; in like manner the Thames to a more or less degree recalls to me Vicat Cole, the rural wayside scenery of Southern England suggests Birket Foster, portions of Suffolk at once bring before me Constable ; so do the characteristics of different classes of scenery stamp themselves upon the artist who paints first for love and last for gold. Whilst sketching a Welsh moorland, some years now past, a friend remarked

to me, 'Trying to paint like David Cox, eh?' Now I was doing nothing of the kind, not even thinking of him, but solely of my work, striving as well as I knew how to portray on paper the wild scene that was before me, just as it came, with all its wonderful combination of brightness and gloom, of solemn breadth and silvery atmosphere. This I know, that if my sketch had any of the feeling of David Cox about it, at however great a distance, it was in the scene first, for it was not within myself.

. Leaving St. Olave's we left for a time the flat country. Our road now led us up a moderate rise, past woods of dark Scotch firs, then by a sandy gorse-grown common, the bright gold of the gorse blooms contrasting strangely and most effectively with the sombre green of the firs. Quite a change this poor dry parched soil after the luxuriant fresh pastures of the marshlands, where the cattle were buried knee-deep in the long grass; and the atmosphere was changed as well, for it too was dry and balmy, laden with the resinous odours of the pine trees and fragrant with the rich perfume of the gorse.

Next our road brought us to the rural hamlet of Fritton, whose quaint little church, with thatched roof and round tower, is as interesting to archaeologists as it is charming to less learned folk by reason of its picturesqueness. Here we caught our first sight of a Broad, and a very beautiful one it proved to be, and greatly were we impressed by its quiet loveliness. Fritton Broad, or Decoy as the local people have it, is some three miles long, but

narrow, more like the reach of some fine river than what we imagined, from the term, a Broad should be. This sheet of silvery water is surrounded by pleasant green woods which double themselves in the stillly flood below. The Mirror Broad we thought that it might be aptly called, but it may not be always as smooth and glass-like as when we saw it, for there was then not a ripple upon its sheltered surface, and not a leaf of all the foliage around stirred in the windless air. A profound peace seemed to rest upon the spot, a quiet nook of earth, given over to a delightful slumbrous tranquillity that knows nothing of the hurry and rush of this steam-driven age, a spot to dream in, 'the world forgetting and by the world forgot.'

Now on the level horizon straight in front of us Yarmouth came into sight, and beyond a gleam of the distant sea stretching vaguely far away till lost in a mystery of pearly grey. We hurried on, for the daylight was fast fading, already the moon was showing in a ghostlike fashion, and we had no desire to be belated on our lonely way. By degrees the trees grew fewer in the landscape, the scenery also grew more and more desolate, and all things became strangely blended and uncertain in the gathering gloom. Now and again from the distant town we caught sight of a gleaming light, and one glittering restless weather vane reflected back the last lingering rays of the setting sun. Arriving at Yarmouth we had some difficulty in threading our way through the mazes of its crowded narrow streets, but eventually, after many windings that took us past endless quays

and over narrow bridges, we managed to puzzle our way to the Victoria Hotel, which we chose on the recommendation of the landlord at Beccles because it had stabling attached, a very essential matter for us. I know nothing more dispiriting than arriving late, with tired horses, at a large town, and finding that our inn has no stabling attached. This happened to us once upon a former journey, a result that necessitated our driving round about in search of livery stables, a proceeding that did not add to our pleasure nor improve our temper. Strangely enough, it was the old coaching inns of the place that were without stables. The Victoria was a modern hotel.

What a quaint old-fashioned town is Yarmouth, or rather I should say ancient Yarmouth, for the modern part that faces the sea is of the usual watering-place type, ugly and prosperous appearing, with commonplace stucco houses ; paraded, well lighted, well drained, and healthy doubtless, but monotonously uninteresting. Old Yarmouth in parts is wonderfully like a Dutch town ; the quay especially, with its Flemish-looking houses, its fishing smacks and inland trading wherries harboured there, all of which remind one of Holland. The grouping of houses around the quay is most picturesque. I never saw anything so foreign-looking in England before. The place is full of architectural pictures. I wonder Yarmouth is not more considered by artists than it is. I can only suppose that being in England, readily accessible, painters can see no romance in it, so go abroad for their poetry. That which is difficult to obtain, that which costs us

money and trouble to reach, we strangely prize the most. The glamour of distance (to the majority of people) is as incomprehensible to me as it is an undoubted fact. The mere virtue of distance, for distance sake, I have yet to learn.

Yarmouth possesses many old houses of great antiquarian interest. Amongst these is the Star Inn, a fine Elizabethan building, having some good carved oak work in its ancient chambers. The Nelson Room here is well worth seeing. Number 4, the South Quay, is also another fine example of old English architecture, though spoilt by its modern front which effectually conceals its antiquity, but the interior contains much excellent carved woodwork of the sixteenth century. It was in this house, tradition asserts, that the leaders of the Commonwealth held council and finally decided upon the execution of the unfortunate Charles I.

The Toll-house in Middlegate Street is another very quaint building, having a curious outside stone staircase protected by a projecting porch quite unique in its way. Internally it boasts of a fine hall with a grand timbered roof, which our ancestors thought fit to plaster over, but the plaster has fortunately been removed and the interesting original construction shown in all its beauty. Why, I wonder, were our forefathers so given to plaster and whitewash? why did they so delight to paint carved oak and panel? and even worse than this, having painted the rare carved oak, they would grain their wretched paint to imitate (a long way off) oak again. Could folly further go? But I must not be too hard upon

our ancestors who cannot reply to my criticisms, for even to this day the love of paint is still retained by many, who it appears to me should know better. I have a friend who is the lucky possessor of a fine country house; the hall and staircase of this are of mahogany beautifully carved. Though not of the best period of English architecture, the work is thoroughly honest, and as good as it can be. An architect who was on a visit to my friend actually recommended him to paint all the panelling and staircase white and yellow; his reasons I know not, but the fact I can vouch for.

The exceedingly narrow lanes called 'Rows' (of which there are over a hundred) are a peculiarity of Yarmouth, and not to be desired elsewhere; so narrow indeed are they that vehicles termed locally 'trollies' have been especially designed to traverse them. We saw nothing to admire in these rows; their narrowness is inconvenient and not picturesque, they have no redeeming merit. But I must be excused from saying more of Yarmouth; we took our outing to see the country, not towns. Besides, I am not writing a guide-book, nor have I the slightest desire to compete with such.

The landlord of our hotel proved to be an enthusiastic yachtsman, and kindly offered to take us for a long cruise, if we could afford the time, along the neighbouring rivers and Broads, but we preferred to keep to the road with its ever-changing scenery and varying interests. I merely mention this good-natured offer as a fair sample of the unvarying kindness we met with from all those we came across

during our journey. Everyone seemed to take an interest in our driving expedition (the landlords of the inns that we stayed at from time to time especially), and did all that lay in their power to add to the pleasure of it. Driving by road is a very different thing from railway travelling surely? Who ever takes a particular interest in the railway tourist? He is too ordinary to be remarked upon, he comes and goes and pays his bill (at least it is to be hoped so) like the rest of his kind, but the mere fact that we had come all the way by road in the good old-fashioned manner that prevailed before George Stephenson invented the iron horse, seemed to attract a kindly attention to us. We were interesting.

From an old work that we came across at our hotel we learnt that the Yarmouth churches fared exceedingly badly at the time of the Commonwealth. Most if not all of the exceedingly fine old brasses that they contained were forcibly removed and melted down, and sold as mere metal. Not content with stealing (I can use no other suitable word) the brass memorials of the innocent dead, according to the authority of the old work in question, even the very gravestones in the churchyards were dug up and made some into grindstones, the broken fragments of others being employed to scrub the decks of vessels; and thus it was the sailors, seeing from the remains of inscriptions thereon that these stones had once formed portions of church monuments, came to call them 'holy-stones,' a term still universally employed.



## CHAPTER XI.

The tameless Ocean—Caister Castle—Ormesby—Martham—A grand Old Church—The Land of the Broads—A new Holiday Ground—National Parks—The Cash Value of Scenery—An Old Sign—Stalham—A Water Expedition—Norfolk Wherries—Puzzling Inscriptions—An Ancient Hamlet—A desolate-looking Country—North Walsham—The Silver Key—An Ancient Market Cross—Antingham—Gunton Park—Picturesque Roadside England.

OUR room at Yarmouth faced the sea. Waking early in the morning we glanced out of our window to learn how the weather promised for the day. We were especially anxious that it should be fine, as we were about to explore the Land of the Broads, to us a new and strange country, and, though a portion of our loved England, as strange and fresh as though we had to cross the Channel to see it.

A glorious, bracing, breezy morning it proved to be, and we looked forth upon a cheerful, inspiring prospect. Though early, the sun had already risen some time, and was shining down from a blue sky across which were drifting careless summer clouds, changing in colour from tender white and pale amber to a wonderful pearly grey. How different these delicate morning tints from the glowing golds and burning reds of a stormy sunset! A grand expanse of tossing waters was before us, the foam-flecked waves were dancing and sparkling in the glad

morning light ; far away a long line of gleaming silver was upon the horizon, and nearer at hand were many busy fishing craft, whose sails were bulging in the freshening wind, and whose wet sides glistened ever and again as they rose and fell, reflecting the tints of sea and sky. From the distant gleam of silvery radiance to the green crested waves breaking upon the sandy shore, all was brightness, movement, and light. It was a day of days for the country, and we determined to start betimes so as to make the most of it.

However formally laid out, esplanaded, terraced, and artificial a watering-place may be, and generally is, it has ever the unspoilt sea before it ; man fortunately cannot mar the tameless ocean by his mean structures and speculative buildings. Kingdoms wax and wane, the old order changes unceasingly, but the sea is now as it ever was, and as it will be for generations still to come. The fashions of the ships that plough its waters truly vary age by age ; but these come and go and leave no mark behind, it is as though they never had been. The majestic old three-decker has given place to the ungainly ironclad, and the graceful sailing-packet to the stately but matter-of-fact swift voyaging ocean steamer, but these leviathans of the deep keep wisely well away from land and are only seen in the dim distance by the visitors to seaside resorts. With the humble fishing craft, however, the reverse obtains, and fortunately time has done little or nothing to improve their delightful picturesqueness away. They are still with us, their red-tanned sails and rich brown

hulls are as charming to look upon as ever ; a picture when afloat as well as when hauled up on the shore with their nets and other belongings gathered about them, in—to an artist at any rate—attractive disorder.

For breakfast we had plump sea-trout, just caught, so the landlord informed us, at the mouth of the harbour, and a more tasty or a daintier dish there could not be. The famous Yarmouth bloaters too, fresh from the curious curing houses, seemed to us to possess a wholly different flavour here from those we have breakfasted upon in town ; the close packing and transit do not improve this delicacy, for a delicacy they are, though not an expensive one.

As we drove out of Yarmouth we noticed the inevitable coast-guard with his telescope vainly sweeping the sea for the never coming smuggler. He bade us a 'good morning' as we passed by, and in reply we asked jokingly if there were any smugglers in sight. 'Lor' a bless you no, sir, as long as we bees here they won't be up to any of their tricks!' and we felt satisfied that at Yarmouth, at any rate, Her Majesty's Customs will not be defrauded by the landing of contraband goods.

We had a level sandy road at first, with a glimmering sea on one hand and a flat stretch of desolate-looking country on the other. A wind-swept land this, for there is nothing to restrain the breezes, come they from what quarter they will. The air was most exhilarating, we felt almost hungry again already, and the horses enjoyed the freshness of the morning too, for they pranced about in a playful

manner, as though they had been in their stables resting for a week, instead of having come all the way from London, doing on the average twenty miles a day. Here I may remark that we took our horses back home, not only none the worse for the journey, but verily, I believe, in better condition than when they started ; the change of air seemed to benefit them as much as it did ourselves.

A few miles of uninteresting road brought us to Caister, a small village. Here across some fields we saw a ruined ivy-grown church, apparently now a portion of a farmhouse, and beyond again the ruins of an old castle backed by woods. An ordinary tourist would of course have at once tramped over the meadows to inspect the ruins, but for some reason we did not feel in the mood for castle-seeing just then, so we remained where we were and contented ourselves with the distant view, which was most charming. Anyhow, from the peep we had we took away with us a delightfully romantic impression of Caister Castle, which impression possibly a closer inspection might have robbed us of ; the reality sometimes destroys the poetic ideal that we picture to ourselves. Yes, it is wise not always to insist upon seeing everything.

A pleasant uneventful stage took us to Ormesby, a pretty straggling village set in the midst of woods ; then we crossed the pretty Ormesby Broad at a point where it narrows and looks more like a river than a lake. Here we noticed an old-fashioned inn that we should have much liked to rest at, but we saw no stabling attached, so reluctantly proceeded on

our way. This Broad district is eminently a land of water (if I may be allowed the expression), in which there is more and better accommodation for yachts and boats than for horses and carriages. Not knowing where we might be able to bait, we glanced at our map, and seeing the village of Martham marked upon it in large letters, we decided to trace our way thither, in the hope that the inn there might have accommodation 'for man and beast.' Rollesby was the next village we came to, and a very picturesque hamlet it is, its cottage gardens being gay and sweet with every homely English flower. Another mile brought us to Martham, as ugly a village as Rollesby is picturesque; the church here, however, is large and very interesting, possessing as it does a beautifully carved open roof and a good doorway; the tower too is very fine, and decorated with elaborate flint panel masonry. There is also some curious ancient stained glass in one window.

Leaving Martham we passed through a pretty country; a pastoral land of soft green meadows and sleepy winding rivers, dotted here and there with restful-looking homes. At Bastwick we noticed what appeared to be in the distance another ruined church. I have now quite lost count of the many ruined churches we saw in Norfolk; they seem to be quite a usual feature in the landscape, and to us a very striking one.

Shortly after Bastwick we crossed a river by the side of which a new inn was being built, evidently for the benefit of boating men and anglers. It is a

rare thing to come upon an hotel in the course of construction in the country, away from towns and villages, but the beauties of the long neglected Broads are becoming better and more widely known, and tourists are finding their way to these parts. Artists, fishermen, and yachtsmen have discovered a new holiday ground here. One unfortunate result of this is (so the landlord of our hotel at Yarmouth told us when chatting with him over our evening glass and pipe in his cosy bar), that a few of the Broads being private property, the owners of them are getting alarmed at the ever increasing number of visitors, and though no objection was ever made to the comparatively few boating-men and fishermen who used to frequent them, the owners in question now fear that in time a public right of way and sport may be established, and therefore have forbidden strangers upon their private waters. This is a most regrettable fact, but the landlords are acting well within their rights, and a few tourists have so trespassed, poached, and misbehaved themselves that the owners of property in these parts have ample excuse for their action. However, happily there is a right of waterway through the majority of the rivers and Broads, so that the closing of a few against travellers does not matter so much as it otherwise would, but some very pretty stretches of water are now, alas! forbidden to the general tourist. Still I understand even in these cases permission to boat upon them is not always withheld if asked, but the asking is troublesome, and there is a fair possibility of a refusal.

It has often struck me, were it feasible, what a good thing it would be if the Government could purchase the right of way for tourists over certain districts of beautiful country, so that all could enjoy them without let or hindrance. The Government of the United States has done a very wise thing (practicable with them) in securing certain districts in their territories, famous for their scenery, as National Parks for the use of the public for ever, under reasonable and necessary restrictions, reserves in which even the enterprising builder cannot run up an hotel without permission, and where the scenery cannot be utterly spoilt by the speculator. If only our own lovely Lake District, a part of Wales, certain portions of the beautiful Highlands, Devon, and other holiday grounds could be converted into National Parks! I must confess that in some parts of the country no small amount of my enjoyment of beautiful spots has been marred by finding these spots carefully fenced in and a charge made for admission. One resents this making a peepshow of Nature at so much a head. A certain charming waterfall I know of has been ruined by a hideous boarding around, so placed that even a glimpse of it cannot be had from the road as formerly. The owner excused himself to me for this act on his part by saying that he had provided a guide to show the fall from the best points of view, and that he had made gravel paths to these (smooth gravel paths by the side of a wild waterfall!), and that if he had not blocked the view from the road no one would pay the guide to take charge of the fall—as though any-

one would run away with it—and any damage a few misguided tourists would do would be as nothing to the ugly hoarding and tidy trim paths that seem strangely out of place on a rugged mountain side. People are beginning to find the cash value of scenery. I have been told, I do not know how far it may be true, that the owner of a few acres of wild unprofitable mountain land in a district now haunted by tourists, land that formerly he could neither let nor sell, has found a little gold-mine in the shape of a waterfall, which he has enclosed and charges so much for admission to view it; the property is now, I understand, a profitable one, and not in the market. By the way, I was very much amused when travelling in California. Riding through a famous valley on one occasion I read the notice, ‘To the Falls.’ Descending to inspect these on foot, I passed a shanty on the way. Here by the side of a box with a slit in it was written, ‘This Fall is on private property; you are welcome to see it and stay as long as you like; on your return you can drop what you think the sight is worth into this box.’ This, I think, is quite unique; the fall was not fenced in, you had no guide to bother you, and it seemed to me that you could pay or not. An American gentleman I was with from ‘down East,’ a wealthy citizen, to my surprise passed the box and put nothing in. ‘Guess it’s a mighty good thing in falls,’ said he to me, ‘and guess that man’s mighty sharp,’ pointing to the shanty, ‘but I don’t take kindly to that there box affair; guess it’s no more his property than mine. No, sirree; see now, I know my countrymen better



than you. We've got a fine park in my city, and there's a grand gateway into it ; I knew an enterprising citizen just commencing his career stand by that gate one Sunday, and when he sighted a stranger from the country, up he went to him and demanded a quarter admission, and he did very well at it, but I guess he made a mistake when he took me for a stranger. That's so.'

But I have sadly wandered from the land of the Broads to far-off America ; let us return to our pleasant English road. Driving on we came to a humble thatched wayside hostel, the Falgate to wit. The sign of this inn, of which I have given a drawing in the early part of my book, consists of a small gate, hanging in the usual fashion over the roadway, and upon it is inscribed, a line to each bar of the gate :

This gate hangs high  
But hinders none ;  
Refresh and pay,  
And travel on.

Passing through much the same class of flat Dutchlike country—a landscape composed of green plains varied by tall poplar trees and spreading elms, traversed by reed-grown rivers and willow-bordered streams—in due course we arrived at Stalham, where we pulled up at the door of the Swan. Just on the outskirts of the village, with only a garden between it and the road, we noticed a charming old house, of which we made a sketch. A picturesque place it was, grandly built, with thick walls and great chimneys. The windows were quaintly shaped and

evidently had been considered by the ancient architect as a feature in the design ; they were something more than mere square glazed holes to let the light in. The form and detail of a window, broken by mullion and transom and varied by shaped leaded panes, have much to do with the beauty of a building. Better surely such quaint quarrelled lights than sheets of meaningless plate-glass ; for, having our plate-glass, is it not a fact that we forthwith proceed to hide its bareness with lace curtains ? The weakest part of a modern house, artistically and architecturally considered, is its windows ; externally they are uninteresting, and internally they fail to suggest enclosed space.

The Swan at Stalham proved to be a homely inn, clean and comfortable. We found the fare there excellent, though plain, and the landlord most civil and obliging. What more could a traveller desire ? As the hostel had stabling attached to it, we determined to rest at Stalham awhile, and explore the local waterways and Broads by boat ; a capital quiet centre this for the purpose.

Having secured our quarters at the Swan, we strolled down to the riverside and proceeded to 'interview' the man there who lets out boats and yachts on hire. We learnt that we could hire a small yacht (if we could sail it ourselves) for the moderate sum of 3*l.* a week. This certainly cannot be deemed an excessive charge, as the craft is supposed to serve as an hotel, there being sleeping accommodation aboard for two in comfort or four in discomfort, the only extra expense being the pro-

visioning of it. Another larger yacht, with cabin accommodation for ladies, and including a man to sail her, could be had, we were informed, for 6*l.* a week. These yachts were plainly fitted up, they were the very reverse of luxurious, though sufficient; but is not a little so-called roughing-it a desirable change in these easy-going times, the salt as it were that gives zest to such an outing? The best way for those who would see the Broads leisurely is to hire a yacht with a man, provision her, and cruise around independent for the time being of the outer world; for an artist or an angler there are many worse ways of spending a summer holiday.

For ourselves we were content to engage an ordinary rowing boat and paddle down the river to the nearest Broad, for after all, we argued, one Broad must more or less resemble another. They have no special mountain peaks presiding over them to give to each a distinctive character; herein, however beautiful they may be, they differ from lakes cradled in mountain lands. Indeed the Broads may be briefly described as meres set in the midst of a level, green, and treeful country. They possess their own peculiar charms, and though they have none of the mountain glory, neither have they any of the mountain gloom. No wooded hills or jutting crags are reflected on their stilly surface; no wreathing mists wander amongst surrounding mountains or lose themselves in a mystery of form upon the higher peaks, blending together earth and sky; no torrents fret the rural silence. A deep repose rests upon the Broads, a mighty dome of blue stretches over-

head from all the circling horizon, and this vast expanse of unshaded sky gives a wonderful feeling of brightness and light to the landscape—or water-scape is it ?

The only boat remaining on hire at Stalham, if not a smart, was eminently a safe one. I don't think that we could have capsized her had we tried, which was one recommendation, though I am bound to confess she had no other. We should have preferred something different, but it was a case of Hobson's choice, and after all, we argued, the boat will not affect the scenery, so we engaged her and proceeded down Stalham river or dyke, for it is sometimes called the one and sometimes the other. River perhaps sounds the most picturesque, so let us call it a river. It was a new experience this, rowing on a river without any appreciable current, with high reeds on either side of us effectually hiding all the rest of the low-lying country. The reeds grew out of the water, and no dry land was anywhere visible, only the sluggish green stream, the greener reeds, and the sky above. But what struck us most was the absolute stillness ; there was absolutely no sound but the musical rippling and gurgling of the water against the prow of our boat and the measured splashing of our oars, unless it were the gentle rustling of the reeds and tall aquatic grasses, as they were stirred ever and again by the soft summer breeze. There was no song of birds or any other sound to break the profound and almost painful silence ; a deep tranquillity rested over all.

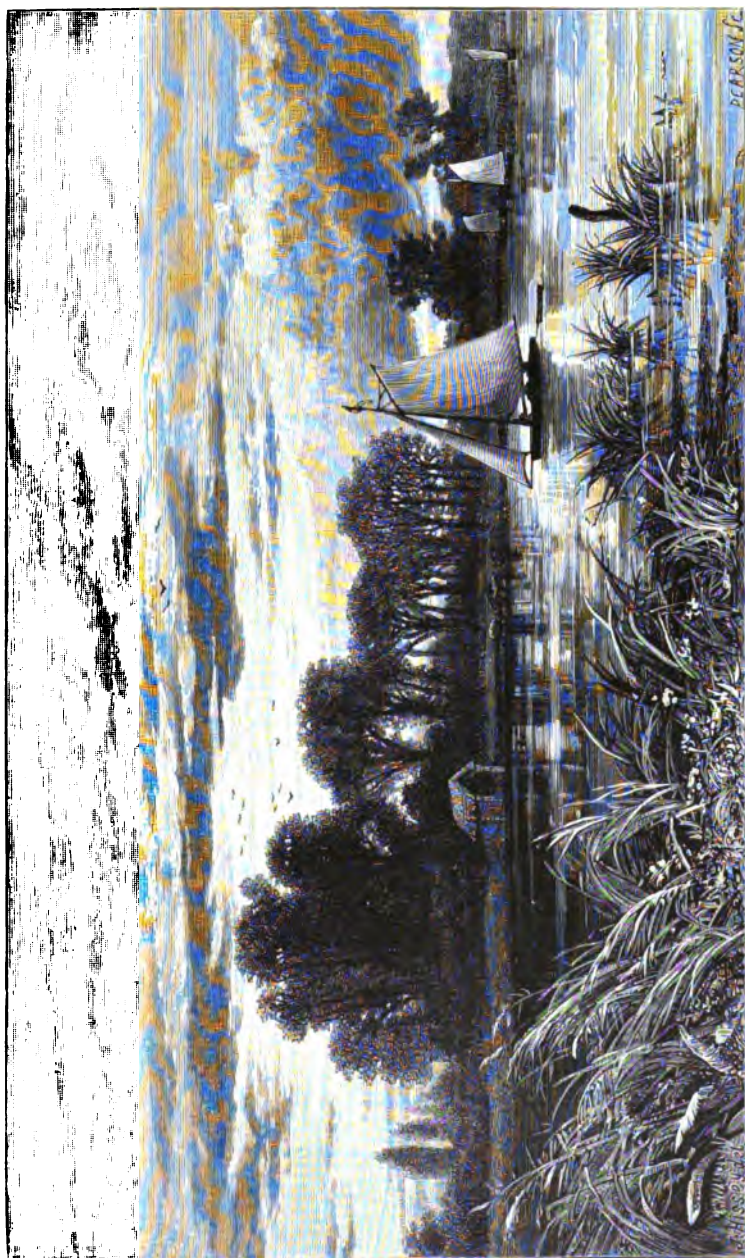
The river was narrow, and presently we observed

ahead of us the great red-brown sail of one of the large trading wherries that infest these quiet waters. We well knew the law of the road on land, but on the water we felt a little uncertain as to whether we ought to keep to the right or to the left, so, as we should have fared badly in case of a collision, and as space was limited, we pulled right into a thick bed of reeds, and waited for the wherry to go by. These big trading wherries of the Norfolk rivers and Broads are to the yachtsman as the steam traction engine is to the driving tourist, the tyrants of the way, before which all must give place or be run down. Slowly the wherry came along, and as it passed by us we hailed the steersman, who was contentedly munching a huge crust of bread and cheese, little heeding his steering. Why should he? was not the river straight ahead, and was it not the business of other people to get out of his way? 'Which is the right side of the river to keep on?' we shouted out; this in case we should meet other like monopolists of the water. To our surprise, knowing the reputation of bargees for incivility, we received a fairly courteous response. 'There bain't no right side,' said he, 'with wherries. It all depends on the wind; you should always keep to the windward side, then us can steer clear.' We thanked the bargee for his information, though certainly it seemed to us that as far as he was concerned it mattered little whether we kept to the windward or not, for he was manifestly too intent upon his bread and cheese to take much heed of such small fry as ourselves.

It was very peaceful rowing down (or up, I am

not very certain which it was) that quiet little river. Very beautiful were the reeds and the many-hued grasses, but even beauty without variety becomes monotonous in time, and we longed to reach the more open Broad. We kept on rowing, which we found warm work in the hot sunshine, but we seemed to get no nearer to it ; it was as though, like a Devonshire lane, the river and bordering reeds had no ending. By-and-by we espied a patient fisherman in a boat anchored by the side of the stream ; of him we asked how far it was to the Broad, and learnt that it was only another half a mile on. That 'half a mile' seemed very long to us. 'What are you catching ?' we asked, wishing to learn the sort of fish that anglers seek for here. 'Nothing,' was the laconic rejoinder. This, though doubtless true, did not much enlighten us as to the object that we had in view, but we refrained from further pressing him.

Then suddenly the river widened out and we found ourselves in Stalham Broad—a silvery stretch of water, surrounded by wooded banks and rich luxuriant meadows ; the prospect seemed quite expansive after the limited horizon of the reed-bound river. Here the white sails of yachts gave life to the scene, which life was further heightened by the glancing light of the wings of wandering gulls, who seem almost as much at home on these inland watery wastes as on the wilder sea. Stalham Broad leads to Barton Broad, which latter has the reputation of being the most beautiful of these Norfolk meres ; at least so the civil maid who waited upon us at



BARTON BROAD, NORFOLK





our little inn informed us. Certainly it is one of the largest, but it appeared to us that the Broads are all about equally beautiful, and, save in size, that there is not much to choose between them. Their surroundings are very similar ; they are specially characteristic as a whole, not individually one from another.

The church of Barton Turf is interesting on account of its richly painted rood screen. It also possesses some curious old brasses ; one of these runs as follows :

I besheche all peple far and ner  
To pray for me Thomas Amys hertely,  
Which gave a masbook and made this chapel her  
And a sewte of blew damask also gaf  
Of God m cccc xc and v yer  
I the said Thomas decesid verily  
And the 1111 day of Auguste was beried her  
On hoos sowle God have mercie.

With the possible exception of the obsolete word 'gaf,' signifying 'gave,' the inscription is easily rendered into modern English. These old Norfolk country churches abound in quaint brasses ; the archaic spelling of the legends upon many of them, however, is frequently most perplexing. Some we could make nothing of, notably one or two very ancient ones that we discovered in the most interesting church of Sall which we visited later on. Here is another inscription upon a brass at Holme, a village on the coast. The last term 'steven' is an old English word meaning 'voice,' and is thus employed by Chaucer ; with this explanation the inscription can readily be made out. It will be noticed in this that

the only important word spelt as it is to-day is 'vestments':

Herry Notingham and his wyffe lyne her  
Yat maden thys chirche stepull and quere  
Two vestments and belles they made also  
Crist hem saue therfore ffro woo  
And to bringe her saules to bliss of heven  
Sayth pater and ave with mylde steven.

Returning along the quiet Broad, in due time we re-entered the sluggish river, whose green waters contrasted markedly with the silvery blue of the more open and deeper mere. Here we found it somewhat difficult to steer our proper course, for many other wide streams diverge into this, and the high reeds on either hand prevented us most effectually from noting any leading landmarks, so that it was not easy to gather whether we were on the right track or not. However, eventually, after taking one or two false turns, we managed to make our way safely back to Stalham once more. A short walk from Stalham is Ingham, a village that should be visited by all travellers in the neighbourhood, on account of its grand church (restored) which contains two fine altar-tombs, one of much interest to the memory of Sir Olive de Ingham, who built the sacred edifice. This once renowned warrior is represented in recumbent effigy, and his helmet still hangs over his magnificent monument.

Out of Stalham our road still led us through a level low-lying land, a country of green pastures and still waters. Presently we came to a narrow winding river, crossed by a grey old bridge. The river-bridge, with the quaint buildings around, and the

one or two ancient fishing boats pulled up on the bank and past service, formed as picturesque a bit as the heart of a landscapist could desire.

On the side of a building here, a little away from the road, we observed a notice board ; from the phaeton all that we could read of this was the heading, which ran as follows : ' Ant Protection Society.' Whatever can that mean, we thought ; some new fad for the protection of insects ? Surely not, but so the words read, and travelling much we have learnt to be surprised at nothing. We stopped the carriage and descended so that we might read the rest of the notice, in hopes that the reading might enlighten us. We were duly enlightened. The ' Ant ' proved not to be an insect at all, but the name of the small stream (dignified by the title of river) that we had just passed, and the society had only the protection of this water in hand for the benefit of anglers.

Then as we drove on the country became desolate-looking, villages and houses were few and far between. The level of the land created within us an impression of limitless space ; it was a lonely road, almost depressing in its loneliness. We met not a soul the whole of the way ; not a solitary shepherd or a farm labourer. A little-travelled land this ; even the lazy cows came and looked at us wonderingly over the gates, as though we were something strange, and as the daylight gradually faded away our road seemed more lonely still. How forsaken are some portions of the English country ! The west was growing a pale yellow, the tall poplars and stunted trees, tortured into strange shapes by the unchecked

wintry winds, assumed weird forms, forms that showed almost black against the golden sky. There was a hushed stillness over all ; the landscape became full of mystery and hovering shadows, the sleepy wind scarce stirred the trees, the clatter of our horses' feet and the crunching of the phaeton's wheels upon the sandy road seemed almost preternaturally loud. Here and there a quiet pool mirrored the pale yellow of the sky, otherwise there was nothing to break the world of grey gloom around. And so we drove on in silence and solitude, till the dreary darkness that had now fallen upon us was cheered by the glimmer of lights from the little town of North Walsham. Here we drove up to the King's Arms, and received the best of all receptions for a weary traveller, a hearty welcome. What delightful resting-places are some of these country inns ! Little wonder that Dr. Johnson, Shenstone, and others have written in their praise, and did not Archbishop Leighton say that he thought the fittest place to die in was a country hostelry ? A good old-fashioned inn is the King's Arms at North Walsham, with little show and much comfort. The modern hotel has, alas ! with more or less success, reversed these desirable qualifications. The King's Arms is still a real posting house, for the landlord told us that he kept as many as fifteen horses ready for posting, and only a few years ago the coaches to Cromer passed through here ; there are few country inns that have so long retained the old-time ways and customs. The landlord told us that he had been there for twenty-three years.

In the morning we set out to prospect the place,

which is picturesque and irregular as most Norfolk towns are. We first made our way to the magnificent church, the grand ruined tower of which is a prominent and striking object. The churchyard is surrounded by houses whose backs face upon it, children were playing at leap-frog over the tombstones, one memorial slab that was lying on the ground had been converted into a slide, and here and there we noticed heaps of rubbish thrown down. The sight depressed us; a churchyard is not a playground, nor a huge dustbin. It is the resting-place of the dead, and should be held sacred. The south porch of the church is of great beauty; this is of elaborately carved stone and flint, with niches (vacant now) for images that the Roman faith loves so well. The old royal arms are cut above the doorway, charged (I believe that is the correct heraldic term) with the three lions of England and the fleur-de-lis of France.

Entering the ancient edifice we found the clerk within. Here we noticed a gorgeous altar-tomb, in different-coloured marbles, gilt and painted besides, to one 'Guilielmus Pastonvs' who died 'Anno Dni 1608.' As it would take us long to draw in detail this stately monument, we asked of the clerk if we might be permitted to take a photograph of it. He replied that really it was not right to bring 'machines' into a place of worship, but after some conversation with that worthy we made it 'right' by the expenditure of half a crown. Besides this monument there is not much of interest within the church, unless it be a large iron chest with six locks, some

monster gargoyles that we presumed formerly belonged to the ruined tower, and the remains of painted figures at the bottom of the rood screen.

As we were starting for Cromer (the Ultima Thule of the journey), the landlord, who came out to wish us good-bye and a pleasant journey, said, 'You should drive through Gunton Park. Lord Suffield has been in the town, and I've got permission from him for you to drive through; the woods there are most beautiful.' I merely mention this to show the kindly thought and trouble that our host had taken on our account, though he was not singular in this respect.

As we drove out of the town we saw the ancient and restored market cross, with a bell on the top and a railed enclosure beneath; a quaint structure that gives interest to the street.

Our road at first led us through a level, green, and treeful country, but without much of interest till we came to the little hamlet of Antingham, which appeared to us to consist of a solitary farmhouse and one or two cottages. But for all in the one churchyard there are two churches, the one thatched and with the usual round tower we had grown so accustomed to—so much, indeed, that a square tower seemed actually strange to us—the other church is in ruins. It is a most curious fact that in a few places in Norfolk there are two churches in a single churchyard, and sometimes both in use! Of which peculiarity more presently.

Near to Antingham we came upon a milestone by the roadside with the inscription upon it legible.

I record this circumstance as milestones, we found to be exceedingly rare upon our journey, and when existing to have generally their lettering completely worn away. A generation that travels by railway has little care or need of milestones or finger-posts, which is unfortunate for the wise few who journey for pleasure along the forsaken highways and pleasant byways of beautiful England.

Entering Gunton Park, we drove along a well-kept road as smooth almost as a billiard table, with mighty sweeps of greenest sward on either side, bounded far away by many-tinted woods. But beautiful though Gunton Park was, we preferred the common road. The park was too well ordered to please us, too trim and neat ; it seemed tame after our wanderings through the wilds of Norfolk, and we were not sorry to get once more upon the old highway, with its tangled hedges, its picturesque cottages, changeful scenes, and varying incidents.

The country now became actually hilly ; glorious prospects of wooded heights and sheltered vales opened out before us, and great was the contrast with our level wanderings of the last few days. One rural hamlet that we came upon at the foot of a hill, with its little common, ancient trees, and pond (in which latter some sunburnt children were intently fishing with crooked sticks and strings for lines, and possibly bent pins for hooks), will long linger in our memory as a bit of true wayside poetry. It was as though one of Birket Foster's charming paintings had been given life. Rural England abounds in such pictures.

Uphill then our way led us to a vast stretch of gorse-clad land ; from the phaeton we looked down upon acres and acres of glowing gold. Never before had we beheld the gorse in such perfection or in such abundance. It was a glorious sight, a miracle of colour ; even Italy can show nothing more gorgeous than a common spread with gorse in the fulness of its bloom, when the sun shines thereon.

Now on through a hilly and wooded country, past pretty thatched cottages, and cottages pretty without being thatched, till after a time Cromer came in sight. As we were on high ground, our horizon was high before us, and so from the top of this our last hill we had a grand panoramic view of this quiet watering-place and the far-reaching, ship-dotted sea beyond. It was a grand prospect, and our eyes rejoiced to range over it unrestrained ; very different this from the limited horizons of the Broads. Then a long descent of a mile or more brought us to our destination. Like Essex, Norfolk is not wholly level ; it is certainly hilly in parts.



## CHAPTER XII.

Cromer—Flint Building—A Wasting Shore—The Poorer Classes—  
 Along the Norfolk Coast—Old Fishing Villages—A Bygone Relic  
 —The Gift of Age—A Hilly Road—The Glamour of the Unknown  
 —Ingworth Church—An Ancient Hour-glass Holder—An Old  
 Clerk and his Story—Aylsham—An Old Posting House—Country  
 Shops—Chat with a Farmer—A Rose Garden in a Churchyard—  
 Lightning Conductors.

ARRIVING in Cromer, we drove up to Tucker's Hotel, not so many long years ago a genuine coaching inn, and one that still retains the formerly familiar legend of 'Posting House.' In spite of the changing times, Tucker's Hotel has manifestly changed but little. It has an unmistakable old-fashioned look ; a flavour of the past seems to linger around its ancient walls ; it is the very antithesis of the modern fashionable watering-place hotel. This building faces inland, and even turns its back to the sea, for it was raised in the days before the value of the sea-front was recognised. It would seem that the architect of this old hostel thought rather of shelter than of marine views and sea winds. It is the same at Yarmouth ; the old inns wherein the travellers of old took their ease do not face the Marine Parade, and it may be noted that they are none the less comfortable for that.

Securing our rooms, and having refreshed the

inner man—for driving across country is hungry work—we strolled out to have a look at the place. The first thing that struck us upon our arrival was the most marked change of temperature. From North Walsham, and until the top of the hill above Cromer was reached, we had been oppressed with the heat of the day ; here, by the side of the sea, we found it almost chilly, and were glad of a light overcoat. Cromer has the repute of being a bracing place ; it certainly seemed to us to deserve the reputation. The town has the advantage, for a summer resort, of facing due north ; we have, from the necessity of our geographical position, few seaside resorts with such an aspect.

Cromer, before the railway came to it, was a quiet, secluded spot, beloved by the seekers after rest and by those who delight not in fashionably dressed crowds, for then excursionists were unknown in these parts. The only way to reach it was by road, and this form of travel does not suit the cheap day-tripper. Even now, for a watering-place that sets itself up for being at all fashionable, Cromer is delightfully unsophisticated. But it is progressing ; the speculative builder has his eye upon the place, and indeed has already begun operations. In a few years, in all probability, what remains of its pleasing primitive simplicity will be no more, and all of its ancient quiet and most of its quaint picturesqueness will have vanished away.

The old church of Cromer is a grand specimen of flint work. This fine structure is the outcome of the piety and prosperity of the former merchants of

the place, or rather of a Cromer that lies now mostly beneath the sea ; for here, as all around the eastern coast, the ocean is gradually gaining upon the land. The soft sandy shore is being washed away at the rate of a yard or more a year, and villages and prosperous shipping towns that had once a place upon the map are now no more, and vessels anchor to-day upon their former sites. Even where the low sand dunes rise into cliffs, the process of wasting goes merrily on. Summer rains and winter frosts in turn disintegrate portions of the soft land, the waves quickly wash these fallen masses away, and so the work of destruction goes on unceasingly.

When we were there the old ruined chancel of the church was being restored and, moreover (a rare moreover, alas !) the work was being well done in reverent imitation of the old. Would that all restorations were undertaken in the same right spirit ! Strange it reads, how it was that this chancel came to be ruined thus. It appears that when the merchants left the place and its prosperity vanished, the church proved to be too large for the lessened congregation, and in the year 1681, to save the expense of keeping so large a structure in repair, the chancel was actually, by order, blown down by gunpowder, and the nave built off ! Surely there never was such a Goth-like proceeding as this ! Now, when Cromer as a watering-place is regaining something of her ancient prosperity, the church is being restored to its former size, if not beauty.

We found the company gathered within our hotel very sociable, and a most enjoyable evening we spent

chatting with them about many things, and of Cromer and the neighbourhood in particular. These old-fashioned inns do not freeze the friendliness out of people, as the grander but less comfortable and never cosy modern ones effectually do. In them, even if you tried, you could hardly be stiff and formal, and after all, when he does thaw, John Bull can be very agreeable and good company. It is a thousand pities when on his travels that he should be so reserved, as though it would injure him to talk with a stranger; and even supposing that stranger were a grocer, what harm? We always make it a point of being friendly with all we meet when away from home. In the rural towns we passed through we made it a rule in the evening to go into the bar of our inn, wherein we found gathered the tradesmen of the place, and by listening to their talk and putting a question now and again we gleaned much out-of-the-way information, and learnt to see the world as others see it. 'You really cannot mix with such people, you know,' remarked some one to a friend of mine. 'No,' was the reply; 'it would be so awkward were you to meet them afterwards in Paradise!' There is a good deal of snobbishness in this world, and it is a much less agreeable place to live in for it. The way some people talk of 'the lower classes' always wounds me; almost as though they were not human beings with souls and feelings like themselves. A better expression would be 'the poorer classes.' I have witnessed many a noble deed done by the latter without hope of reward or chance of glory. I have seen them man the life-

boat in the teeth of a raging storm in an almost hopeless endeavour to save their fellow-creatures' lives. Only a few days ago, standing by the sea-shore, I saw a fishing-craft trying to make port in a heavy gale capsize. There was no time to get the life-boat out, but three brave fellows, hard-working toilers of the sea, *at once* put out to the rescue, though they had only at hand a little open pleasure-boat, wholly unfit to stem the raging waves. It was at the peril of their lives they went, but little they thought of that. Of such are Nature's noblemen. My life was once saved by one of these our poorer brethren ; and I verily believe that I owe the life of one of my little ones to the unremitting care of my faithful nurse. The comforts of the rich mainly depend upon the services of others less blessed with this world's goods than themselves. It is the misfortune, not the fault of people, that they are born poor.

Although Cromer is becoming fashionable, and has lost for ever the charm of its ancient quiet, along the coast to the right and left of it are many picturesque and primitive old-world villages whose beach remains just as the fishermen and Nature have made it, hamlets that have never been touched by the hand of the modern builder, unimproved and unsophisticated. Known only these remote, out-of-the-world spots to a few artists in search of fresh painting ground, and to fewer travellers, but, thanks to the few who have discovered them, the tourist may here and there find clean and comfortable apartments, though homely, and now and again very

fair accommodation may be had at the village inns by those who do not object to a little roughing. At such places along the coast the traveller may enjoy the purest of air and the freshest of breezes; he may gaze upon beautiful scenery and be surrounded by novel sights and characters, and all at a nominal expenditure. Sherringham is one of these picturesque and primitive seaside villages, a place an artist could take many a delightful picture from. Weybourne is another, and even, if possible, a still more primitive spot, set in the midst of a wild country that reminds one of the bleak north coast. Here are the ruins of an old monastery, the remains of a Roman encampment, and on the wind-swept heath behind the village are several curious hollows or pits, supposed to have been ancient British dwellings, so that there is matter of interest for the antiquary as well as for the artist and the seeker after fresh untravelled scenes. Weybourne used to be famous for harbour, for the water is very deep here close in shore, available therefore for large ships; and an old distich has it—

He who would old England win,  
Must at Weybourne Hoop begin.

This spot was closely watched and guarded at the time of the Great Armada, also during the wars with France, lest troops should be landed there.

Returning to Cromer, along the coast on the other side are to be found many quaint old-world villages, oddly built and eminently picturesque. A district this abounding in scenic surprises, full of in-

terest, and possessing a certain wild poetry all its own, and though

These scenes to careless eyes may seem  
Irregular and rough and incomplete,

they have a peculiar charm to the artist, a charm hard to put into words. A *terra incognita* this to the majority of Englishmen, who as a rule know little of the romantic beauties of their own land out of the hackneyed paths of tourist travel. Those who are fond of untamed nature, of fresh scenes and curious people and customs, would find a rich reward on taking a summer ramble in this neglected corner of old England.

Taking the villages in their order from Cromer, there is Overstrand with its picturesque ivy-grown and ruined church, desolate and devastated. Some of the old tombstones here bear the signs of having formerly possessed exceedingly fine brasses, but now all about is in ruinous decay :

O'er their words defaced  
Grow weeds and nettles of the waste.

Next comes Sidestrand, with the solitary round tower of its decayed and dismantled church standing boldly out upon the very verge of the storm-swept cliffs, surrounded by its forsaken churchyard, a very picture of desolation. Then after passing through a pleasant stretch of green country comes Trimmingham ; the church here was once upon a time (as the fairy stories have it) of great interest, but alas ! it has been effectually 'restored.' Save the mark ! If we were rightly informed, at the time of this so-called

restoration even its ancient brasses and inscribed tombstones were not spared, being ruthlessly covered with cement and overlaid with trumpery modern tiles that have no story to tell. The church is of little interest now ; of old it was the resort of many a pious pilgrim, who went thither from afar to worship at the shrine which contained (or was supposed to contain) no less a relic than the head of John the Baptist ! By the way, I wonder how many heads John the Baptist had. If all the skulls exhibited as sacred relics in various churches in mediæval times belonged to this saint, he must have possessed at least a score of heads, of which peculiarity history gives no record. Alas ! how easy it is to make an old building look like new, but a new building can never be made old. These ancient churches of our forefathers that are scattered throughout the land, hoary with age, having the bloom of centuries upon them, are sacred possessions ; their time-worn walls are eloquent of the past, their grey stones tell their own story. But too often the 'restoration' of such means nothing less than the destruction of their history ; the precious gift of antiquity improved away, neither money nor tears will give it us back. About another two miles further, following the coast, and eight miles altogether from Cromer, brings us to the little fishing village of Mundesley. Charmingly situated this remote hamlet, in a dip of the cliffs just where a tiny friendly river loses itself in the sea. The Ship Inn here is clean and homely, with a pleasant little lawn looking on to the sea.

Let us now once more return to Cromer, which,







ON THE LONE NORFOLK COAST

after our out-of-the-way wanderings beyond railways, gives one the impression of being almost gay. The lone Norfolk shore upon which many a gallant ship has left its ribs, is not lonely here. Cromer is now a get-at-able place ; the railway is surely but effectually driving all the romance out of it, but the country round about is full of interest and will remain unspoilt for many a year yet. Perhaps one of the most interesting walks from the place is to Felbrigg Hall, only some three miles away. The house, situated in a finely timbered park, is a magnificent and well-preserved specimen of a Jacobean mansion, and repays a visit. This charming estate formerly belonged to the Windham family. The last owner of that name, known as 'Mad Windham,' sold the property, house, land, ancient pictures, furniture and all, to a wealthy Norwich merchant, a Mr. Kitton ; and a local saying has it, with more wit than one generally finds in such things :

Windham has gone to the dogs,  
But Felbrigg has gone to the kittens.

Out of Cromer it was collar-work for some distance. The first part of our stage was decidedly hilly, but on reaching the high ground we were well rewarded for our climb, for we had wide views all around over a beautiful country, a country of hill and dale, of wandering streams and waving woods. The prospects that opened out before us ever and again were most charming. The curious round towers of the churches gave a special character to the landscape ; had it not been for these, we might easily have imagined ourselves in some picturesque part of

Yorkshire. The beautiful scenery of this portion of Norfolk is not so well known as it deserves. Not only is the scenery lovely, but it abounds as well in ancient buildings, grand old churches, moated manor houses, Elizabethan homes, mostly interesting these and always picturesque. Not unfrequently these past-time mansions have some quaint legend attached to them, and not a few have the reputation of possessing ghosts of the good old-fashioned sort ! None of your modern paltry invisible spectres that rap upon and turn tables for money.

Our journey that day was in truth a very pleasant one. The weather still smiled upon us, the morning was bright, breezy, and invigorating, and as we drove along we felt as light-hearted and 'jolly' as a boy just home from school for his holidays. How inspiring it is, this driving across country, how health-giving this being out in the open air the whole day long, without fatigue, the mind agreeably occupied with the ever changing scenes, and anticipating all sorts of pleasant possibilities ! We had a kind of vague feeling as though we were exploring an unknown land ; at any rate it was a fresh one to us, possessing all the charm of novelty, the glamour of mystery that lies upon an undiscovered country. Now that 'globe-trotting' is in fashion, and travellers rush all over the earth as fast as steam can take them, it is a wholesome change to remain at home and explore some portion of neglected England.

A wild west wind met us as we drove along, wild but warm. It rustled the leaves of the trees and bent the green corn before it, making great green

waves as it passed over the long fields, waves on land as well as on the ocean, and the continuous 'sur, sur, sur' of the wind-blown foliage gave forth a soothing murmurous sound like that of the distant sea. Great white clouds were drifting past us overhead, causing mighty patches of shadow to sweep over the far-reaching landscape, and now and then a summer shower blotted out a portion of the view. The atmosphere was clear, the distance near and well defined, as it is in such weather ; the transient effects of the ever changing light and shade were most beautiful. Now an isolated gleam would reveal an old church tower half hidden before, then it would rest upon a red-roofed farmstead, and travelling on would, as if by magic, change the leaden hue of a stream to a shining silvery streak. It is wonderfully beautiful and interesting to watch upon a cloudy day a ray of sunlight wandering thus capriciously over a far-spreading landscape.

Though our drive was most enjoyable, there was nothing special to note on the way till we reached Ingworth, a pretty little village by the side of the fishful-looking river Bure. Here on a rising knoll by the side of the road we observed a forsaken-looking church, its round tower in ruins, its graveyard grass-grown and neglected, the inscriptions on some of its tombstones weathered away, others chipped and uncared for, its thatched roof patched here and there to keep the rain out. Somehow this neglected-looking church appealed to us ; such a humble, primitive place of worship, yet, as we found, interesting withal. Finding the door of the

structure locked, we glanced inside through one of the windows. Internally the church looked as neglected as it did externally, but our eyes alighted upon an interesting relic of the past, an hour-glass stand. We had never seen one *in situ* before, so we determined to go in search of the clerk and get the keys in order that we might sketch this quaint relic of ancient times. Our proceedings had aroused the curiosity of a village lad who was lazily looking at us from over the churchyard wall. We inquired of him where the clerk was to be found. 'At whoam,' he replied. 'Whereabouts is his home?' we next asked. 'Over yonder,' the youth answered, pointing vaguely round the horizon. This was somewhat indefinite. 'Do you think, if we gave you threepence, you could fetch him for us?' was our next query. Without waiting to respond, the lad ran away in the direction of some houses, and presently returned accompanied by the clerk. Upon receipt of the promised reward, the lad, evidently with an eye to business, asked if he could fetch anyone else for us; he knew everybody in the place, he said. This was rather embarrassing. The clerk proved to be a very old man, with a grey beard and a moist nose; he was bent almost double with 'rheumatics,' and was, as he informed us, 'hard o' hearing.' Not an ideal clerk by any means. Poor old man, he fumbled a great while with the big key before he could get it into the keyhole, but he would not trust it to us.

Entering the church, we found the walls to be whitewashed, though not very white; the floor was of brick, uneven and damp; the communion table

was of bare oak ; the thatch showed through above. The sight was a depressing one. And this was the house of God ! Whilst making our sketch, the clerk informed us that he had been a carpenter, but he had to live in a damp cottage and so caught the 'rheumatics bad and wern't able to work, which is hard upon a poor man, as it's main hard to live now.' Poor fellow, we heartily pitied him ; he did not seem to think it 'hard' that he had been obliged to live in a damp cottage, he grumbled only that he could work no longer. 'It's a poor sort of a place, the church,' he remarked. 'I tries to keep it tidy a bit, but the birds do come in and mess it so.' Then he said to us, 'I can show you something worth seeing, though it be such a poor place. Look'ee there, sir,' and he pointed beneath a worm-eaten seat, 'there's a bit of real Norman woodwork ; see how deeply and sharply it's cut. I know what such work is, being a joiner. Now pardon me, sir, but I doubts very much as ever you saw a bit of Norman woodwork afore.' Then he became quite enthusiastic. 'Come outside with me, and I will show you something else ;' and hobbling away as fast as his infirmities would permit, at the bottom of a buttress he pointed out to us a shield with a cross, a crown, and a scourge engraved upon it. Lichen-stained this, but the carvings are as sharp as the day they left the ancient workman's chisel—how many long years ago ? A little gem that shield, in a rude rough setting of flint and weathered stones. Then he took us to an old tomb-stone, on which he said was a very curious inscription, but unfortunately the lettering was so weathered

away that we could not make it out ; possibly we might have done had we devoted a whole day to the task. The clerk tried to remember the wording for us, but his account was so confusing that we could not make much of it. 'I do knows one thing,' he added, 'it were written long afore railways ;' and we quite believed him. Poor old man ! how his watery eyes glistened as we gave him a piece of silver ! I wish now it had been more. He took our little gift in his trembling hands. 'Aye, sir,' he said, 'this will be a help to I ; it's a happy day for me, this.' How little do the deserving poor complain of their hard lot, how grateful they are for small mercies !

Wishing good day to the rheumatic clerk, we once more proceeded on our way, almost immediately passing over Ingworth bridge, which crosses the river here at rather a sharp angle to the road. It certainly is an awkward corner for a stranger to take on a dark night, as the turn is so sudden and comes unexpectedly, but in the daylight it is right enough unless one drives recklessly ; yet in the old coaching days several accidents occurred at this spot.

Without further incident we came to Aylsham, a pleasant and picturesque little town. Here we patronised the ancient coaching and posting hostelry of the Black Boys, wherein we were made exceedingly comfortable. During all our wanderings through rural England we had never stayed before beneath the sign of the Black Boys. As we drove up to our inn, we observed painted upon it the old-time legend, 'Posting House. Posting in all its



Branches.' We were both pleased and surprised to find posting by road still so much resorted to in Norfolk. The railways there, it would seem, have not monopolised all the traffic, nor have, the Fates be praised! the good old quiet inns been superseded by the restless station hotels, for which fact the comfort-loving traveller has reason to be supremely grateful.

In the coffee-room of the Black Boys we met with an architect and his wife, out on a sketching tour, and actually posting through the country. I wonder whether (in this nineteenth century, in which the land is gridironed all over with railways) there is any other county wherein a tourist could post thus about from one town to another. As a rule, in the greater portion of rural England, the landlord of a country hotel would be about as much astonished at being asked for a post horse as though he were requested to mention the hour at which the next up or down coach was due.

We had a very agreeable and interesting chat with the architect and his wife, and compared notes as to scenery and buildings with mutual profit. These chance friendships on the way added greatly to the pleasures of our journey. Strange though it may seem in these days of cheap travel and rapid transit (when one may go from London to Scotland and not exchange a word with a fellow traveller), during our leisurely wanderings by road through various parts of Great Britain, we made many friends, and have kept them. The kindly feeling of everyone we came across was one of the most marked features of our journey. Of course the majority of

those we met with we never saw or heard of again ; but such pleasant companionship, though temporary, tends to enliven and give an added zest to an outing like ours.

Like as a plank of driftwood  
Tossed on the watery main  
Another plank encounters,  
Meets, touches, and parts again,  
Thus 'tis with men for ever  
On life's uncertain sea—  
They meet, they greet, and sever,  
Drifting eternally.

Our inn at Aylsham faced the wide market-place, which, with its surroundings of old-fashioned houses and shops, formed a very pretty picture, not so much for any beauty it possessed as for its simple naturalness. There were no rows of shops or houses all after one plan, each structure bore the impress of individuality ; the sky-line was pleasantly broken by the irregular forms of gabled roof and clustering chimney. The buildings too were time-toned to a restful harmony ; the only things that marred the scene were the glaring, crude colours of some wretched iron enamel advertisements of London firms, setting forth the supreme merits of somebody's soap, baking powder, and the like. They appeared strangely out of keeping with their mellow surroundings. And here, perhaps, I may remark, that glancing in the shop windows of the country towns, from time to time we observed that a large proportion of the goods displayed were of foreign origin. I do not allude to such articles as tea, coffee, sugar, etc., which of necessity must come from abroad, but to such commodities as flour, bacon,

cheese, preserved meats and vegetables of different kinds, eggs, and so forth. It certainly seemed to us strange, that with farms unlet, some even going out of cultivation, we should import so much produce that could be grown at home. There are acres of land in England untilled, because, we were told, it will not pay to till it, and yet we import yearly much of what that land might produce for us at home. I am not, I am thankful to say, a political economist, but common sense tells me this is not as it should be, nor can I see the point of emigration meetings to send Englishmen out of England whilst penniless foreigners flock hither to take their place.

A farmer of whom we sought information told us that farming now was a losing business. 'I've been a farmer all my life,' he said, 'but I would not take a wheat farm rent free. Stock farming may pay, but wheat growing won't. My sons have gone to Canada, and if I were a young man I'd go there too.' It certainly does appear astonishing that land should be going out of cultivation in crowded England, with all the advantages of cheap labour and the home market close at hand. As the farmer seemed an intelligent man, we further ventured to question him as to whether he could suggest any reason for this strange state of affairs. 'I can't say as how I can give you the cause,' he replied, 'but it's a fact: farming in England don't pay these times. I've lost money at it, and so have lots of others that I know, and some keeps on losing, hoping for better times that never come. I do not say as how I could not get some sort of a living on some farms, with a

struggle, but it would be hard work and constant anxiety. I might just manage to live, perhaps, but I could put nothing by for old age. It's the big manufacturing towns that makes the laws now, and they care nought for agricultural interests—least-ways, that's my opinion. But if all our best country folk have to leave, where will England be, I wonder?' And we wondered too.

Aylsham possesses a very fine old church—an art education in itself. John of Gaunt is reputed to have been the builder of it, and his arms are sculptured on the beautiful old font, so that there may be something in the tradition. Wandering around the old churchyard, groping amongst the ancient, moss-encrusted, lichen-stained, and almost undecipherable tombstones in quest of quaint inscription or curious epitaph, we came upon a piece of ground by the side of the chancel railed off and laid out as a garden, with beds of blooming and sweet-smelling roses bounded by boxwood borders and tiny gravel paths. The little garden was well cared for. On the wall above it was the following inscription, which we copied :

IN THIS GARDEN IS BURIED THE  
BODY OF  
HUMPHRY REPTON, ESQRE.

Not like Egyptian Tyrants consecrate,  
Unmixed with others shall my dust remain,  
But mould'ring, blending, melting into Earth,  
Mine shall give form and colour to the Rose,  
And while its vivid blossoms cheer Mankind,  
Its perfumed odours shall ascend to Heaven.

We were unsuccessful in our search for epitaphs,

but we came upon several tombstones raised to the memory of devoted wives and husbands, with spaces left for the surviving husband's or wife's name to be added when they died in due course ; but in several cases no further addition has been made to the inscriptions. We presume, therefore, that in these cases both the surviving husbands and wives had consoled themselves with other partners, and rest elsewhere.

The porch of the church is very fine, and is decorated with flint and stone panelling—so effective and frequent in Norfolk. It possesses an elaborately carved niche, from which the figure has been removed, probably at the Reformation ; doubtless this contained an image of the Virgin Mary and Child. The ancient royal arms are also carved upon the porch. The tower of the church is fine, and shows markings plainly proving that the roof of the structure was formerly of a much higher pitch. This tower is protected by a lightning conductor. ‘ Nothing special about that, or worthy of mention,’ you will probably exclaim, kind reader ; but, as a matter of fact, there are, as far as our experience goes, exceedingly few church towers protected from lightning ; the so-called conductors that most have attached to them are simply no protection whatever. In the first place, these are frequently of iron, worn and rusted away, sometimes of copper rope so thin as to be useless, and not unfrequently carefully disconnected from the building by glass or porcelain holders, so that if the lightning were to strike any other part of the structure the

holders would effectually prevent the electric fluid from being led harmlessly to earth. I make bold to say that nine out of every ten conductors fixed to buildings in England are worse than useless—even dangerous. Therefore, from our experience in such matters, we were surprised for once, in a remote Norfolk town, to find the church fitted with a real conductor, that would conduct, and properly attached; this one is a continuous copper band, of sufficient width, and nailed to the tower, and really protects it. It is astonishing how much ignorance there is upon this matter of lightning conductors.

## CHAPTER XIII.

A Wooded Country—A Gipsy Encampment—Cawston Church—A Grand Carved Roof—The 'Plough-light' Gallery—A Fine Rood Screen—The Saint who cured the Gout—An Interesting Fresco—A Curiosity—Sall Church—Hard Times—The Cottager's Want—Ancient Brasses—Birds in Church—Reepham—Names not always pronounced as spelt—Two Churches in one Churchyard—A Quaint Tomb to a Crusader.

WE had another fine morning on which to continue our pleasant pilgrimage ; the clouds that had gathered threateningly around overnight had dispersed, the sun was shining softly down, and a balmy summer breeze was blowing. What better could the most fastidious wayfarer desire ? Our aneroid (which useful instrument we always carry with us when driving across country, for hotel barometers are not always in working order or to be relied upon, and some hotels have none), our aneroid then we found had risen considerably since the previous evening. We felt therefore that we had nothing to fear from the weather, so we started away in the best of spirits, full of pleasant anticipations as to what the day would bring forth. All before us was fresh, unknown ; we had not even given a thought as to where we should spend the night, so unfettered and delightfully uncertain of our movements were we.

Such freedom is of the essence of a driving tour ; to be, or feel, in any way bound would be to rob it of its chief advantage.

We passed at first through a level stretch of agricultural country, the scenery of which, though agreeable, it must be confessed was a trifle monotonous, reminding us of Dr. Johnson's famous saying, that 'the country is only a collection of green fields,' for the landscape was without any character. However, after a time our road gradually plucked up spirit and became even hilly. As the soil grew sandy and poorer, so the scenery improved, woods took the place of ploughed fields, and very beautiful woods they were. The clumps of Scotch firs that were mingled with other trees came as a pleasant change from the familiar elms, their dark green foliage and rich red trunks formed a striking contrast with the fresh greens of the woods around. A very picturesque tree is the Scotch fir ; it has a sturdy individuality all its own, its branches grow in a wayward fashion, as though they could never quite make up their mind which direction they would finally take. I think that the Scotch fir has more character than any other tree, not excepting the oak. Land is of little value here, so there were waste stretches left unenclosed by the wayside, covered with green waving bracken and yellow with broom, and from the hidden thickets of these rabbits were continually darting across our path. By-and-by we came to a gipsys' encampment, and quite a picture it was, with its film of blue smoke ascending from a wood fire till it lost itself in the bluer sky. The



fragrant scent of burning wood in the country side, how delightful it is !

It was a pleasant thing driving through that wooded country ; the pines as we drove along filled the air with their warm resinous odours. But suddenly the woods ended and we found ourselves once more in the open country ; a picturesque village was before us, clustering round a magnificent church. Though the village was small the church was grand ; it challenged attention, manifestly it would repay a visit. So we asked where the clerk lived, and were told, ' There ain't no clerk now ; you'll have to go to the rectory to get in ' ; so to the rectory we went, and obtaining the key without question, we proceeded to inspect the fine old church, which, with its square tower and dressed stonework, looked peculiar to us after the round towers and flint walls that mostly prevail in Norfolk ; so soon does the eye get accustomed to new forms and surroundings. Though finer far than the average country fane, this church was of the same type, yet after our short wanderings in these parts it had a strangely unfamiliar look. Perhaps I may as well state here that the name of the place possessing this grand and most interesting church is Cawston. I know a certain cathedral, in better repair truly, but for all by no means in my opinion so fine a structure as this remote village church. How comes it, I wonder, that Norfolk should have so many truly magnificent sacred edifices, and the majority of these too situated in small hamlets, that never seem to have been much larger or more important ?

Entering Cawston church we were at once struck by its splendid carved open oak roof, of the 'hammer-beam' type, enriched where the wood-work abuts upon the walls by figures of winged angels, the vacant angles of the beams being further decorated with carved tracery. As we were looking delightedly upon this superb roof, a glorious specimen of old-time craftsmanship that surprised as well as delighted us by its rare beauties so wholly unexpected—for it was, to employ a favourite expression of our American cousins, 'sprung upon us'—as we were gazing upon it, half lost in a day dream, the rector entered the church, introduced himself, and most kindly offered to conduct us over the building (of which he seemed proud) and point out what was of interest. It was a fortunate chance that gave us so excellent a guide to so beautiful and interesting a church. We told him how much we admired the wonderful roof. 'Yes,' he said, 'well you may, for it is fine indeed, though little known. The late Sir Gilbert Scott once came to see the church, and carefully inspected it; he was as surprised as you are at the splendour of the roof, which he said "will vie for beauty with any other in England." Great praise this from such an authority, yet none too great. 'But,' continued the rector, 'the roof is sadly out of repair; pieces of decayed and worm-eaten oak now and again come down with a clash. It is not quite safe to hold service in the church.' Just then, as though to prove the words, a bit of oak carving came tumbling down close to where we were standing. We certainly should not have cared

to make one of the congregation ; we started on one side. The rector took matters more philosophically ; he was used to that sort of thing, we were not. ‘ That’s nothing,’ he remarked to us ; ‘ bits will keep falling. See, here are two huge figures of angels that came crashing down the other day.’ And mighty blocks of carved oak they were, over six feet in height ; let us hope that no more wooden angels will come down upon the heads of the devoted congregation. It is a pity that such a glorious roof should be falling to pieces and decay thus, but the village is poor, and money for reparations—I use the word advisedly in place of the abused term ‘ restoration ’—doubtless difficult if not impossible to collect.

Next the rector called our attention to the ‘ plough-light ’ gallery. We had never heard of such a thing before, and its purpose was unknown to us ; the rector explained, however, that once a year in times past a plough was brought into the church to be blessed. According to the custom then prevailing here, the plough, gaily decked with many-coloured ribbons, was placed beneath the oak carved gallery in question. Round this gallery an inscription runs in old English, but difficult to decipher because of the curious forms of many of the letters, and because some of them (and here and there even whole words) are worm-eaten more or less away. However, we managed after much puzzling to read as follows : ‘ God spede the plow : and send us ale-corn enow : our purpose for to make : . . . at y<sup>e</sup> plow-light at Sygate. Be mery and glade : Wat good ale yis work made.’ It will be noticed that the sup-

posed modern American way of spelling plough 'plow' is employed in this ancient inscription, as it is in old works of the period. The Americans have simply retained the past-time method of spelling certain words, as existing when the pilgrim fathers were by force of circumstances driven from their English home, and changed these not (as they became altered in the land of their birth), owing to the little communication between the far-away countries in those distant days. 'Ale-corn' is manifestly meant for barley. *A propos* of this inscription we were informed that even to this day a 'Plow' Inn exists at Sygate, a village near, and it was to this very inn that, after the service of blessing the plough, the congregation went and mostly got gloriously drunk. A strange mixture of religion and worldly pleasure !

Then the rector called our attention to the very fine rood screen. This, as may be gathered from what decoration remains on it, was once richly coloured and gilt, and must have been gorgeous to look upon. Even the narrow upright pillars have tiny niches with canopies over for miniature images of the lesser saints, images that have been carefully removed long ago ; these small niches, it would appear, from broken pieces still existing at the sides here and there, were covered over with talc. The base of the screen is reserved for paintings of the apostles and other saints ; the figures are well drawn and skilfully coloured, though all are damaged, some by time and long neglect, some purposely. There is a curious representation of St. Matthew, with what looks like

a large pair of spectacles on ; the effect of this is startling, and would be laughable were it not for the manifestly serious purpose of the painter. Then the rector especially called our attention to a saint whose name and merits were totally unknown to us, St. Schorn to wit. He is drawn holding a boot under his arm, and apparently squeezing out of it a queer-looking little red devil. A unique saint this surely—whatever could he be about? ‘Oh!’ exclaimed the rector, noticing our questioning look, ‘that is the saint who used to cure the gout ; he was highly esteemed at one time, and much prayed to.’ Looking at that painting, one doubtless of many others of a similar superstitious nature that formerly existed in this and other churches, intended to impose upon the credulity of the ignorant for priestly gain and priestly power, I felt at the time that I could almost pardon ‘Master Will Dowsing’ for the destruction that he caused to be wrought amongst such superstitious articles—pictures, images, inscriptions, and the like, even though in so doing much that was beautiful was lost to us for ever. Beauty can be purchased too dearly at the cost of religious freedom, and priestly despotism is the worst of all tyranny.

It is sad and strange to trace how the Church, once the only friend of the poor, the ready champion of the oppressed and weak against the strong, gradually, as she grew more prosperous and powerful, became tyrannical and intolerant. The primitive creed (all-sufficient for the age), became darkened by ignorance, superstition combined with a pompous ritual took the place of a simple faith (a beautiful

faith because so simple and satisfying to an unquestioning generation); the churches became more and more splendid; mighty poems in stone, the culminating glory of Gothic genius; with wonderful windows of tinted, traceried glass, glowing in the sunshine like molten jewels; with frescoed walls, picturing the strange meaningless miracles performed by the later saints—stories on stones these for the benefit of the poor and ignorant; with soaring vaulted or carved oak roofs, and with high altars ablaze with many lights and sparkling with rare gems; anon mysterious and dim with incense, before which chanting priests in gorgeous robes made low obeisance. Very effective, truly impressive, most poetical, and enchantingly romantic all this, but really not religion at all. The wealth the Church accumulated, her unlimited power in a credulous age, made her in turn arrogant, selfish, grasping, and finally tyrannical; the priests, instead of being the servants of God, had become the willing slaves and tools of ambitious kings and designing statesmen.

Not on them the poor rely,  
Not to them looks liberty,  
Who with fawning falsehood cower  
To the wrong when clothed with power.

Yet once, the same poet, Whittier, writes :

. . . . the priesthood, like a tower,  
Stood between the poor and power,  
And the wronged and trodden-down  
Blessed the abbot's shaven crown.

Gonè, thank God, their wizard spell,  
Lost their keys of heaven and hell;  
Yet I sigh for men as bold  
As those bearded priests of old.

But I am digressing, and intruding into the province of religious history. Such history leads me on to disputable ground, and I do not care to tread this overmuch. Let us get back once more to the interior of Cawston church. Here on one of the walls we observed the fading remains of a former fine fresco. This represents the Blessed Virgin Mary, with a grey dove—probably once white—descending from the clouds and placing a ring on her finger; before her in adoration bows a priest clad in mediæval vestments; from his person issues forth a scroll, and on this is written in old English letters, barely legible now: ‘Hail, May Mary, Heaven’s Queen, Mother of that blissful food that died on Rood.’ The rector next pointed out to us the finely carved end of a miserere seat; this is sculptured into the form of a dragon swallowing a kid, a wonderfully well-executed bit of fanciful art work, such as only a mediæval craftsman could conceive and carry out. Sir Gilbert Scott, we were informed, when shown this, declared it to be the finest bit of carving that he had ever seen. Then we were taken to view a little sacristy chapel, now used for occasional services, and this finished our inspection of the interior of this magnificent and interesting old church, all the more interesting to us because we had come upon it accidentally, and had not been prepared beforehand for its neglected beauties by a laudatory guide-book account.

Going now outside we glanced at the stately tower, a grand specimen of fourteenth-century masonry. The ancient doorway, at the foot of this

(now built up) is enriched with fine carving, deeply cut, and as sharp to-day as though it had only just been chiselled. It is weather-stained truly, but that is all, and proves how careful the builders of old were as to the stone they used. This tower was raised, the rector (who has studied to good purpose the past history of his fine church) being still our authority, in the year 1370, so that it has seen five long centuries pass over it, and seems for all its age as strong and perfect as when first erected. Those men of the past knew how to build. The spandrels on either side of the doorway contain the arms of the then Earl of Suffolk, founder of the church. The left-hand spandrel shows 'the wild man of the woods,' a hairy savage with club in hand, the other spandrel has a dragon carved upon it. We were about to bid our entertainer good day and to thank him for the great kindness that he had shown us, strangers that we were; but he would have us go into his house, saying that he had a great curiosity to show us there, and we, nothing loth, followed him. The curiosity proved to be a very old case of thick leather, black now with age; this was literally covered and adorned with various coats of arms in relief; on the top was a crest representing a griffin, finely executed. The case was intended to hold the chalice. Were it possible it would have been interesting to trace its history, but in this our host could not help us. As we were leaving the rector said, 'You should on no account miss paying a visit to Sall church; it is only a few miles away, and is to antiquaries the most interesting church in Norfolk.'



We thought that it could hardly be more so than that of Cawston, but determined not to disregard his advice, so getting our map out we steered our course in the direction of that place.

At a point where two roads diverged we pulled up, not being certain which of these to take; our map showed only one, and there was of course no friendly sign-post at hand to help us. Presently a shepherd came along the road; of him we inquired the way to Sall. 'Sall, Sall,' he repeated to himself; then aloud to us, 'I never heard on such a place in these parts, and I've lived hereabouts all my life.' This was puzzling; the village was marked plainly enough on our maps, only the road thither was not as clear as we could wish, and yet this shepherd was a native, and knew it not, although it could not be more than a few miles away now. As we were meditating to ourselves what we should do, we chanced to glance round and in the near distance noticed the tower of a fine church peeping out of some trees. That surely, we thought, must be the church we are seeking, so we asked the name of the place. 'That there be Saul,' was the reply. Then it suddenly occurred to us that places are not always pronounced as they are spelt, and that Sall was called Saul. So thanking the shepherd for his information, we drove on along the road that he pointed out to us as leading to 'Saul.' A few miles of pleasant and wooded country brought us to the primitive village, and as we drove by the church in search of the clerk, we saw what a grand pile it was, though looking sadly out of repair. Here again

was another truly magnificent church, with only a few poor cottages gathered around. We were directed to where the clerk lived, but he happened to be away at work in the fields. However, his wife was at home and volunteered to go with us to the church. On our way thither we learnt from her that her husband was a farm labourer as well as the parish clerk, and earned the magnificent sum of seven shillings a week. 'You see, sir, he's a old man and cannot do much work, but it's hard getting a livin' these times; he only gets 1s. 3*d.* a week for bein' clerk, and that's not much. I does a little washing and charing, but this is a poor place now. The farmers have no money; no one about has.' We glanced at her; her face had a sad, anxious, desponding look, but she was very tidily dressed, the cottage in which she lived was clean, and there were a few flowers in the tiny garden. Then she told us that they had to pay 4*l.* 7*s.* a year for their little cottage, and 'it be hard work to live and find the money. If now we only had a bit of a garden that we could grow a few vegetables in, it would be a great help.' It does seem strange, this almost universal reluctance of landlords to let a small plot of ground with their cottages, especially when farms go a-begging, and considering that the rent willingly given for a little bit of garden land is at least four-fold as much as it is worth any other way. Such a trifling concession would benefit the cotter, would make him contented, and it seems to me could hurt nobody. A bit of garden that he could cultivate at odd times would prove a real blessing to many a

poor cotter, besides possibly keeping him away from the public-house ; for, having nothing to do after work, and his home being not usually over-attractive, he generally gravitates thither.

Reaching the grand old church, we entered it by a finely carved stone porch ; there were rows of shields containing various coats of arms above the doorway, and upon the spandrels were representations of winged angels swinging censers, their bodies feathered all over ; and very materialistic spirits they looked, but we supposed that such was the idea of an angel that presented itself to the ancient carver, and so he realised his imagining. It is worthy of note how much better the mediæval craftsman rendered demons than saints ; he was full of fanciful conceits and loved to express them. By a curious mingling of man and animal he produced wonderful grinning, hideous devils ; here his cunning hand had full liberty, and he delighted in it, but to make an angel he knew no better than to give a woman wings and a body covered with feathers. He could lower man, but he could not raise him.

Entering the church, the first thing that struck us was the exceedingly desolate and neglected look of the interior ; all the sadder this, for its decaying glories told what a splendid edifice it must have been when in the full beauty of its prime. The truly superb carved, gilded, and painted roof (very similar to that of Cawston) seemed to us to be in a state of complete decay, and fast going the way of all uncared-for things ; the colours were faded and portions of the carvings gone. There were remains of frescoes

on the walls. These must have been very fine in their day, but fading now fast away; damp and age had wrought sad havoc with them. The vast interior seemed strangely empty; the few worm-eaten seats gathered in the centre of the church, and filling only a small portion of it, made the impression of desolation complete; the rest of the structure was vacant, uneven flooring. Birds were flying about within the sacred structure. 'They come through holes in the windows,' the woman said; 'they do dirty the place terribly.' There were several very ancient and interesting brasses on the floor, but these were so damaged and dirtied that we could not make much of them. It was a melancholy sight, that once grand church going to decay thus. Of the brasses, we noticed one with the date MCCCXL; another (with the figure gone) of 1484. But the best preserved and most curious of these was a small one, representing a man half nude, and almost a skeleton, the lower portion of his body being wrapped in a shroud. There was a long inscription beneath, in quaint lettering. We should have much liked to gather its purport, but all that we could make out of this was the first and last line, and even the name we could not decipher beyond the initial character, which we judged to be B. The two lines we did trace out are as follows:

Here lieth Iohn B . . . . under this marbel ston

Whose sole our Lorde him have mercy upon.

The date of this, if we read it aright, is 1453. Sall church must be of exceeding interest to the

learned antiquary and ecclesiologist. The birds were very noisy and busy in the carved roof as we left ; it may be that some of them had ideas of nest-building there.

It was early in the morning when we left Aylsham; it was now past midday, and the cravings of the inner man suggested to us that it would be well to seek some inn. Sall could give us no accommodation ; we did not even notice there the almost universal village 'public.' Not knowing where to go, our map was consulted, and as Reepham appeared to be the nearest town, we traced out the road thither and hastened on.

We found to our dismay upon arriving at Reepham (pronounced by the natives 'Reefhem'), that it was a market-day there; the little town was full of farmers and cattle, and, just as we feared, the inn was full also. The stables were thronged, and the courtyard was crowded with conveyances of all sorts, but the ostler came up smiling and said he would manage to get our horses in some way, and he did, though how he contrived to do what seemed to us the impossible I know not, but we doubled his fee upon leaving for his civility and cleverness. A model ostler he. We were only too thankful to get the horses stabled at all ; as for ourselves we had to feed on the crumbs that fell from the farmers' 'ordinary,' and very substantial crumbs they were. Although the farmers had made mighty inroads into the great joints of beef and large tarts, there remained more than enough to satisfy our wants.

Our repast finished, we took a stroll round the town, and eventually found our way to the churchyard, or perhaps I should more correctly say 'churches' yard, for there are actually two churches in the one God's Acre, and there were formerly three, the parishes of Reepham, Whitwell, and Hackford each having its own separate church in the same churchyard, but that belonging to Hackford was burnt down in 1500. The church allotted to Reepham seemed to us as though it might be interesting, so we set out to find the clerk, and a pretty hunt we had for him. We were directed to three different houses by as many different persons, upon asking where he lived, which was puzzling, as we thought one home enough for the clerk. However, at the first two houses we called at nobody was at home, 'being market-day;' then we had a search for that individual at one or two public houses, but he had always 'just left' as we arrived, which was provoking and trying to our tempers. Then in despair we made our way to the third house. A woman answered the door. 'Could we have the keys of Reepham chuch?' we asked. 'I am very sorry, but I ain't got them,' was the reply. We were perplexed what to do next; we explained that we had been directed there, as well as to two other houses, and asked if she could tell us where the clerk really lived or was likely to be found. 'Sure I don't know,' said the woman; 'he don't live here; but I've the key of the Primitive Methodist Chapel, if you would like to see over that.' We had no

desire to see over the Primitive Methodist Chapel, and so went our way, thinking to ourselves that the people of Reepham were exceedingly stupid. Then we did the only thing remaining to be done: we sought out the rectory, getting even misdirected as to our road thither, but at last we discovered it, and, ringing the bell, asked to see the rector, explaining our wishes and the strange difficulty we had to learn anything about the habitation of the clerk. The rector very kindly offered to take us over the church himself. Here we found a very fine and interesting canopied tomb, with the effigy in marble of a Crusader, cross-legged, lying upon a heap of stones. The good knight's nose was broken, otherwise the monument was well preserved. The inscription told us this was to the memory of Sir Roger de Kerdeston who died in 1337. The rector pointed out to us a coat of arms and crest upon the tomb, which he said was the same as now borne by the Girdlestones, which family therefore, it was presumed, had been related to the Crusader in question. The most curious thing about the monument is the fact that the valiant knight is shown as resting on a rough heap of stones—not a very easy bed. The rector said that he could give no explanation of this peculiar monumental feature; he told us that it had puzzled several learned antiquaries who had seen it, and who disputed energetically upon the matter, as is their wont, but came to no satisfactory conclusion as to why the knight was so represented. We guessed that he might perchance have fallen in

the battle-field on a heap of stones, and the fact was thus recorded on his tomb. Next the rector called our attention to the very ancient lead-lined stone font, older than the church, and of Saxon origin. He told us that if we cared to mount to the top of the tower there was a very quaint inscribed bell there, well worth seeing; but as the steps were many, winding, and much worn, and the tower dark, we preferred to imagine the bell rather than to climb to it. Thanking the rector for his courtesy, we returned to our inn and ordered the horses to be 'put to.' Whilst waiting for the phaeton to come round to the door, we discovered a work on Norfolk in our room. Glancing through this volume we came upon the particulars of two wonderful trees that grow in the bowling-green of the Woodrow inn, which inn we passed early in the morning on our way from Aylsham to Cawston, but not knowing at the time of these peculiar trees, we did not see them, though we might easily have done so, as we pulled up to make a sketch of the pretty wayside hostelry, which attracted us by its bold sign-board swinging from a beam that stretches right across the road in the old-time style. The following is the account of this strange freak of nature which we transcribed into our notebook: 'There are two trees situated in the bowling-green of the Woodrow inn which are great curiosities; not only every branch but every twig of which bears leaves of three different kinds of trees, namely, oak, beech, and hornbeam.' We also made a further extract from this work as follows:



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‘ Near to the Woodrow inn, by the roadside, a small stone pillar is erected on the spot where Sir Henry Hobart, Bart., M.P. for Norfolk, fell in a duel with swords in 1709 with Mr. Oliver Le Neve, who fought with his left hand.’

## CHAPTER XIV.

Bawdeswell—Deserted Highways—The Country from the Box Seat—A Rebus—A Sudden Storm—East Dereham—Facts in Paintings—A House of 'MDII.'—Architectural Scenery—Cowper's Grave—A Pious Theft—St. Withburga's Well—A Coloured Windmill—A curious Church Tower—A Ford on the Way—Watton—The Scene of the Tragedy of the 'Babes in the Wood'—A Steam Dog-cart—Another Rebus—The Beauties of Wet Weather.

FROM Reepham we drove to East Dereham, passing through a thinly populated country, wild and woody a great portion of the way. Bawdeswell, the first village we came to, has a modern church, the old one having been pulled down some years ago. I think this is the only village during our tour in the eastern counties the church of which was entirely devoid of interest. After leaving Bawdeswell our road was bounded to the left by a finely timbered park, which park was enclosed by a brick wall that followed faithfully every turn and twist of the way. The cost of building this must have been very considerable, and after all it did not form a good fence, for a wall is not difficult to climb for boys or poachers; a thick-set thorn hedge is by far a better protection, and much pleasanter to look upon; you cannot climb such a hedge, or break through it with impunity. On the other side of the road, in curious contrast with the well-wooded park, was a

wild treeless common, its barren bleakness being enlivened however here and there by the bright and cheerful bloom of the gorse.

It was a lonely, forsaken road ; we met no one of whom to ask the name of the park, and our map did not give it. How strangely deserted now are the old highways, erst so full of life and bustle ! What would our forefathers (who posted or travelled over them in coaches) think, could they come to life again and view the almost abandoned thoroughfares, with their sides grass-grown owing to the little traffic, their milestones chipped and crumbling away, their sign-posts gone, or armless and useless, their once flourishing inns converted into farmhouses or cottages—the traveller thereon unfrequent ? A past presence seems to linger over these old roads ; they recall memories of the days that are no more ; a journey then was not such a matter-of-fact affair as it is now. There was a good deal of romance and picturesqueness in travelling when the road was in its full glory ; too much of romance sometimes, indeed, for there was always the possible chance of a misadventure with the ‘knights of the road,’ besides plenty of excitement of a milder sort. Perhaps after all the present age is a pleasanter one to live in ; we see now only the poetry of the past, we are chiefly familiar with its bright and sunny side. A modern generation knows nothing of the discomforts of a long journey by coach in stormy winter weather ; a pleasure outing on a well-appointed drag upon a summer day is hardly a fair comparison ; and has not even the poet said :

S

The good of ancient times let others state ;  
I think it lucky I was born so late.

The present will itself in due course become the past. I wonder whether our descendants will then speak of these days as 'the good old times.' In spite of the great changes that have taken place during the last half-century, rural England away from towns and railways has outwardly altered little, and so as we drove along we felt that we saw the country much as our ancestors saw it who travelled this way, and very different the landscape looks from the box-seat of a phaeton from what it appears in the 'hurrygraphs' of it that alone can be obtained from a railway carriage. The road rises and falls with the country ; when driving, therefore, your prospect is not cut off ever and again by a deep cutting or darksome tunnel ; all the houses face the highway and make their best appearance to it. You enter a town or village in a natural manner, not sneak in or pass through it by back streets as on the railway, so that you really see the country towns and villages you pass through when journeying by road. You rush through a town by rail, and can thus know nothing of it, but driving leisurely along its streets, even if you make no halt, you obtain a very fair impression of the place.

Our road now led us by a gradual descent to a pleasant green lowland valley. Here for the first time on our journey our ears were greeted by the musical murmur of falling water, caused by a little river that formed a weir over which it tumbled and foamed in a delightful manner. A pretty willow-



A RUINED WINDMILL IN THE FENS



bordered stream it was, whose wanderings could be traced afar by its silvery gleaming and by the greenness and freshness of the vegetation along its banks. By the side of the river was a sleepy hamlet, an unsophisticated place, that might be miles from anywhere. What peaceful, uneventful lives the dwellers in such spots must lead, as far removed, to all appearance, from the hurry and rush of the outer world as though they were on another continent !

Another stretch of pretty country, dotted now and again with ancient homes, brought us to Swanton. Here a very fine church arrested our attention and caused us to make a halt. We found that not only were the doors of the building locked, but also the very gates leading into the churchyard ; we therefore contented ourselves with an external inspection of the old fane. Though interesting architecturally, there was nothing of special note in the structure, unless it were a rebus we discovered over the doorway, in the shape of a swan and a large cask for a tun, carved in stone, forming thus the name Swan-ton.

Remounting the phaeton, we observed that a sudden change had taken place in the weather. A great, heavy, dun-coloured cloud bulging with aqueous vapour obscured the sunshine ; it seemed strangely low as sweeping along it touched the very tops of the tall elms ; it gave us a curious feeling as though it might descend and crush us. Then without further warning a clap of thunder broke the stillness ; this was immediately followed by a regular deluge of rain and hail. We had not even time to escape the wet by driving under some wide-branching

trees ; anything more sudden in even our changeful climate I do not remember to have experienced ; we were taken wholly unawares. Of course we got a wetting, after which too late we donned our mackintoshes. No sooner had we done this than the cloud vanished as if by magic, and the sun shone once more upon a wet gleaming world. In the village was an old wooden windmill, the sails of which when we arrived were motionless ; these now began to whirl round and round a great pace, for the thunder had brought up half a gale of wind. We saw the miller running up to his mill in haste from the public house, where, doubtless in despair of doing any work that day, he had been indulging in some good Norfolk ale. Possibly he feared now lest his mill should 'run on fire,' and was anxious to get the brake on, for these old wooden mills often get burnt down by the speed at which their sails are whirled round in a storm that comes suddenly upon them.

The wet road soon changed to a dusty one, proving that the storm was only local ; but though the sky immediately overhead was clear, on the horizon dark indigo clouds were gathering suspiciously, and a distant rumble of thunder warned us to be prepared for rain. Fortunately we had an excellent road, and giving the horses their heads we made what haste we could. We raced the storm and won. Just as the rain commenced to fall we reached East Dereham and drove into the shelter of the King's Arms. 'I am afraid we're going to have a tempest,' remarked the ostler, and it certainly looked like it, but after a sharp shower and a roll or



two of thunder the weather cleared up again, and we strolled out to see what the town had to show us.

Wandering about without any special motive, we found ourselves in the outskirts of the place. Seeing a windmill a little way off, we made for this in the hope of obtaining a view of the surrounding country, for experience has taught us that, as a rule, from the spot whereon a windmill stands a good view may be had. These structures, when possible, are placed upon a height, and as buildings and trees obstruct their motive power, their immediate surroundings are mostly open, so that there is nothing to interrupt the prospect. This mill was one of the picturesque, if not profitable, old-fashioned sort, the whole structure turning on a pivot. We noticed that the front, which of necessity has to face the wind and storms, was weather-stained and its painting faded; the contrast of the windward side with the others was most marked, yet though I have seen many of these old mills in pictures (for they are favourite subjects with artists) never have I noticed any attention paid to this fact. It is the careful consideration of such unconsidered trifles that gives the impression of truth and adds materially to the value of a picture. I have seen a painting on the walls of the Royal Academy, and on the line moreover, in which the rigging of a ship was altogether wrong. Artists cannot be too careful of details; photography by its exactness has taught us much, and we may still learn from it as to minor truths, if not beauty.

Returning to our inn we crossed the old London

mail road that passes through the town ; here, where it is useless, strangely enough for the first time upon our journey we came upon a perfect milestone, with the lettering thereon legible. This informed us that it was a hundred miles to London (by the most direct way of course). We did not propose to follow this road ; direct roads are not always the most beautiful, and were we not, like the more famous Dr. Syntax, out on a tour in search of the picturesque ? Indeed we had no very clear idea as to what line of country we should take upon our return journey ; more than once already we had actually changed our course when on the road, as the country in another direction looked more attractive than that which we were traversing. Before starting on our day's pilgrimage we always made a point of chatting with the landlord and ostler about the stage we proposed to take ; this in case we might glean anything of interest *en route* from them ; thus we managed to pick up much local information, and sundry traditions and particulars about old places on our way that do not get generally into guide-books.

Next morning early we wandered out to get a glance at the church before starting. Near to it we discovered some curious and ancient houses ; one, which bore traces of former elaborate ornamentation, had the early date 'MDII' carved upon it. The old red-tiled, uneven roofs of these ancient dwellings, with the sun glinting upon them, contrasted powerfully with the solemn grey of the grand church tower close by. Church, tower, and cottages composed a charming picture, as quaintly effective, as full of

colour, and as delightful to look upon, as though the scene were designed by an artist. It was a bit of architectural scenery (if I may be allowed the expression) that for picturesqueness could hardly be excelled. Why will not painters give us glimpses of some of the quaint townscapes (to invent another word) of our romantic, unspoilt English towns, instead of everlastingly rushing off to the Continent for such subjects? Some day the artist may come who will reveal to Englishmen the romantic picturesqueness of their old-time and remote country towns, and the beauty of them will come as a surprise to many.

The church here is an exceedingly fine one, and its grandeur impressed us (used even to fine churches as we were). It is interesting from having two towers, one in the centre of the building, the other, a very massive one, standing apart by itself in the churchyard. Bishop Bonner, of notorious memory, was once a vicar here. Entering the church we found a plan of the building hanging against a pillar; this explained very briefly, but sufficiently clearly, the past history of the old fane, giving the dates and particulars of the various styles of architecture that go to compose its grand harmonious whole. Each period is set forth by different tints; the plan also points out the many matters of interest within the church. We found this most useful in understanding the building, and infinitely preferable to the uncertain information usually bestowed on strangers by the average clerk. Cowper is buried here; the monument to the poet is a very simple and plain one; it consists merely of a palm leaf laid over a

Bible, sculptured in marble, with the following brief inscription beneath :—

In Memory

Of WILLIAM COWPER, Esquire.

Born in Hertfordshire 1732,  
Buried in this church 1800.

In the churchyard are several ancient tombstones (though we could not discover amongst them any quaint epitaphs). Some of these tombstones, though nearly three centuries old, have the lettering upon them as sharp and clear as when first cut ; moss and lichen have, truly, filled the incised words, but they are only the more legible for this. Many a modern monumental inscription of less than half their age is hardly to be read now. So careful were the men of old, not only of their work but of the material they used ; it was not with them the universal cry of cheapness, but of quality. Of its kind the work done was as good as it could be for the price paid. We know better now ; we do it as badly as may be, in order to secure the more profit.

But the most interesting thing in the churchyard is St. Withburga's Well. Withburga, it may be remembered (I write this, though we had to hunt the fact up), was the daughter of Annas, King of the East Anglians. She became a nun, and after leading a pious life, like the rest of mankind and womankind, good or bad, died, and was buried at this spot, temporarily in a wooden coffin, till a marble one could be procured. Upon exhuming the body for reinterment in the latter, it was found to be uncorrupted ; there-

upon Withburga was made a saint, and her relics, according to ancient tradition, worked many miracles and marvellous cures. Pilgrims began to flock to the place where her body rested, and the church became prosperous. So valuable indeed did this precious possession become, that the monks of Ely came and piously stole it for their Abbey, for there was a keen competition for relics in those days, and the strongest took from the weakest, all for the glory of God—and more especially for their own profit. However, in this case, though the church was robbed of the saintly relic, from out the desecrated tomb a spring of clear water issued, and this well also performed wonderful miracles and possessed the merit that it would not be appropriated by other envious monks. And is the well and spring not there to this day to prove the truth of the tradition? Above the well is an inscription ; we copied as much of this as we could, for the first part of it was hidden with ivy, which threatens in time to cover the whole. Here follows all that we could make out :

youngest daughter of

ANNAS,

King of the East Angles,  
who died A.D. 654.

The Abbot and Monks of Ely  
Stole this precious Relique  
and translated it to Ely Cathedral,  
where it was interred near her three Royal Sisters  
A.D. 974.

We decided to drive from East Dereham to Thetford, baiting at Watton. A long and hard day's

work it proved to be, as the way beyond Watton led us through a very desolate and wild country, the little-traversed road being hilly and rough. The thunder overnight had unfortunately unsettled the weather, the sky was overcast, and had a stormy look. The wind blew fresh, and drove the great masses of blue-grey vapour rapidly along overhead : now and then a gleam of watery sunshine would burst forth, then all would be grey and cheerless again. 'What sort of a day are we going to have?' we asked of the ostler. That individual looked wisely around, then glanced at the weathercock. 'It's just possible it may turn to rain,' he replied, 'and it's possible it may keep fine,' which was a very safe opinion, if not a very definite one. 'Which way may you be going?' remarked a farmer who was standing by and had overheard our question. We did not see the point of the query, but told him our proposed stage. 'Well,' was the comforting rejoinder, 'if it do rain, you'll have the full benefit of it, for it is an open country, and there bain't much shelter.'

The country at first was open, with wide tilled fields and few trees ; an uninteresting land some people might consider it, but we are not of those 'who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and cry, "'Tis all barren."' Though the land was cultivated, farmhouses and cottages were conspicuous by their absence ; where the inhabitants hid themselves we could not understand. The only structure we observed for some time was a windmill and miller's house by the wayside. The miller was manifestly

proud of his mill, and had an eye for colour, for he had painted his sails a bright red, and the fan sail behind red, yellow, and blue, and the colours were really a relief to the monotony of the grey sky and brown fields. Anything is better than the gloomy black tar which farmers use so much on their wooden out-buildings.

The country kept much of the same character to Shipdham, a very pretty village with a picturesque, homely hostelry, that almost tempted us to make a halt there, but we had a long stage before us, and did not care to linger by the way. The church as we passed looked interesting, but we had seen so many of late that we did not feel in the mood just then for further church-viewing ; the tower of this we noticed was crowned by a curious sort of double cupola, quite unique in its way, an ancient wooden erection covered with lead, that by its quaint originality lent an interest to the structure. Nowadays, when church architects strive to be original they fail lamentably, and produce freaks in building rather than anything really novel or effective. The old mediæval builder often managed to combine quaintness with seriousness ; we seem never to be able to achieve either, and are seldom happy in our religious edifices unless we imitate old models. Passing by some pretty cottages, each with its own tiny flower-filled garden, we reached once more the open country.

Our road now led us through a level pastoral land, with nothing remarkable to notice on the way. Soon after leaving Shipdham we came to a ford,

with a wooden footbridge by the side for the benefit of pedestrians. These fords are becoming, like the old ferry-boats, very rare, but like them they are exceedingly picturesque, if at times inconvenient after heavy rain. Strange though it may appear, I know of one ford in Middlesex, within a drive of populous Kensington, crossing which upon one occasion we had the water above the axles of the phaeton, and had nearly to turn back in consequence.

I saw an artist sketching this very spot some days after, and anyone seeing the picture would hardly credit that it could possibly be so near to the mighty Babylon; but in truth some of the most unsophisticated places are to be found well within twenty miles of town. I know of a certain most picturesque and quaint country hostelry, two-storied, low and rambling, with red-tiled lichen-stained roof and great stacks of chimneys, that might be anywhere far away in the distant shires, and yet this delightful old inn, with its old-fashioned rooms, its bedchambers with their old-time four-posters and leaded lattice windows, is an easy day's drive from the bustling Charing Cross. And oh! how great is the contrast, from the modern palatial hotels there, where on touching the electric bell you can have everything but comfort, to the little unpretending rural inn which is comfort itself!

Arriving at Watton we drove up to the Crown, where we found excellent quarters both for 'man and beast.' Close to this little one-streeted town is Wayland or Wailing Wood, in which, according to tradition, 'once upon a time' (how I like that



term! it is so delightfully indefinite), two infants were murdered by their uncle, which tragedy gave rise to the nursery romance of the 'Babes in the Wood.' We were surprised to find so good an hotel with such extensive and excellent stabling as we did here, being such a remote and small place, but on inquiry we found out that the Crown belonged to the largest horse-dealer in the county, and that the inn was maintained chiefly, if not wholly, for the accommodation of visitors who came to inspect the stud, the landlord living apart in his own house. The head ostler showed us over the stabling with a manifest eye to business; he did his best to induce us to purchase a pair of cobs 'that were not to be had every day.' Fortunately, we did not require fresh horses every day, so we were content to admire and take their good qualities for granted. At the best, buying a horse is a very risky matter: a friend once said jokingly to me that it was easier to choose a wife than a horse. It is possible that in the near future electric motors may take the place of horse-flesh for the propulsion of pleasure carriages. As I write, an electric dogcart has been successfully tried on the road, and will work for six hours. Some few years ago now, the inventor of a carriage propelled by steam invited me to inspect and take a ride in it. This too was after the dogcart fashion; the steam was raised by petroleum, the carriage worked perfectly and made no observable noise. The sensation, however, of travelling in a vehicle on an ordinary road without a horse in front was at first most singular; the machinery was all hidden in the space below the

seat, and the whole affair had the exact appearance of a dogcart going along, without a horse where a horse should be. The invention, however, came to nothing because of the law forbidding any carriage on the public roads propelled by steam to proceed at a greater rate than four miles an hour, and also requiring a man with a red flag to walk in front. I have, however, met more than once huge traction engines on narrow country lanes, steaming along without any man in front; in comparison with these tyrants of the highway, with their fussy puffing, the steam dogcart in question seemed quite harmless. The one thing about it we did not like was sitting just over the boiler, for the best regulated boilers will now and again explode. Electricity has the advantage over steam in this respect.

Whilst the horses were resting we took a stroll round the town. Nearly opposite to our inn we noticed an old clock tower which helped to give a character to the otherwise uninteresting thoroughfare of the place. This bore the date of 1679. On it is a carved rebus, a hare and a tun, the same device being repeated on the weather vane and upon the spandrels of the doorway. We read this to mean Hare-ton, but the name of the town was undoubtedly Watton. This rebus therefore puzzled us, and at last we gave it up and begged explanation of a passer-by, who happened to be a farmer of the old-fashioned sort, John Bull personified. 'Yes,' he said, 'that stands for the name of the town. A wat and a tun; Watton, you see!' But we did not see, all the same. We merely remarked that we thought

the animal looked uncommonly like a hare, and that we had never heard of a 'wat' before. 'Well now, to think of that!' responded the farmer, with a look of pity at our ignorance. 'We calls hares wats in these parts.'

Wandering about the town, we felt that there was a want, but what it was we could not make out for some time. Then suddenly it dawned upon us that we had walked over the whole place and had seen no church. Being usually such a conspicuous feature in England, especially in Norfolk towns and villages, its absence was noticeable. We looked all about for a church, but could see no sign of one. The spreading collection of houses around seemed strangely incomplete without this familiar object to preside over the buildings like a protecting mother caring for the living and watching over the dead. These ancient fanes are the outward expression of the age of faith. Within their hallowed walls how many generations have listened to the oft-repeated ritual, have sorrowed and rejoiced! The names that may be traced on the ancient tombstones are frequently the same names as are to be read upon the shops around.

Not being able to discover a church anywhere, we asked a boy if there were one, and where it might be. He pointed out to us the way to it across some fields, for strangely enough the church here is situated at some distance from the town. We found it to be of the usual Norfolk type, with a round tower, and apparently restored. We did not see the interior, for we were in no humour for clerk-hunting. Here

is a problem. You arrive at a strange town, you wish to see the church ; how is it that there is always such a difficulty in discovering the clerk ?

It was now past two o'clock, and as we had still some dozen miles or more to do, we thought it time to get back to our inn and proceed with our journey. But as we walked along we noticed that the clouds were gathering darkly in the direction of our stage ; a spot or two of rain fell as though to remind us that the weather was by no means settled. On arriving at our inn we felt undecided as to what would be best to do. We were in very comfortable quarters truly, but then on the other hand we had seen all that Watton had to show, and, to be honest, beyond horses there was not much of interest in the place. We took a glance at the barometer, but that useful instrument did not afford us much comfort. It stood at 'Rain,' and fell from that low estate towards 'Much Rain' when we tapped it. Then we asked advice of the ostler. He had no uncertainty at all about the matter. 'You'll have a wet drive if you starts,' said he, 'and it's a wild bit of country ; twelve miles and never a public house ; a hard country I calls it.' Just then, however, a gleam of sunshine showed itself. We cared not for ostler's prophecy nor falling barometer ; we would start at once. That gleam did it, and, as it turned out, had much to answer for.

'If you wish for peace, prepare for war.' We wished for fine weather and so prepared for wet. Our mackintoshes were put on, our waterproof aprons were wrapped around us, and all made 'taut.' If the rain came it could not hurt us much, and after all, a day

such as this, when the clouds are bulging with rain, wind-driven and wind-woven into a mystery of forms, letting down now and again from a break above a transient gleam of light on the wet glistening leaves and roadway, is not a day to be despised, and comes even as a relief after the glare of the summer sun.

Wet weather has its rewards ; then it is that the colours of the landscape are brought out in a wonderful manner ; the leaves and grasses, laden with moisture, reflect the gold of the sun's rays when they come ; the distance then is delightfully distinct and colourful ; the air too has a freshness, a clearness, that contrasts refreshingly with the heat and haze of a sultry summer day. And after rain, when the sun does shine, what a brightness and sparkle there is all over the landscape ; how clear and sweet is the air, washed from all impurities ! There is really only one kind of bad weather, in my opinion : that is when the sky is of a uniformly leaden hue, from which the rain pours down in a ceaseless wearying monotony, with no break in the mass of dun-coloured vapour overhead, nor any reasonable prospect of one.

## CHAPTER XV.

Stormy Weather and Stony Roads—Over Croxton Heath—The Making of a Highwayman—Thetford—An Old-time Hostel—Ancient Earthworks—On the Wrong Road—The Charms of the Unknown—A Relic of the Coaching Age—A Gipsie's Encampment—An extraordinary Photographic Result—Ingham—‘Trespassers will be Persecuted’!—The Pleasures of Photography.

THE little town of Watton left behind, we soon entered upon a wild wooded country, a country where the signs of human habitations were few and far between. Trees bounded our roadway on either side, the wind stirred and rustled their branches and leaves with a continual ‘sur, sur, sur.’ A wild warm wind it was, blowing in fitful gusts, now just bending the tops of the trees, now roaring and whistling through the stems, now falling almost altogether away. The dark, drifting, lowering clouds foreboded rain; all Nature seemed in a state of unrest. There was a kind of mild excitement in driving on such a day through a strange country; the air was so invigorating, the effects of light and shade over the landscape were so peculiar and powerful. Away in front of us the horizon was of the darkest indigo, just above it the sky was of a wan yellow, and towards us great grey clouds drooping with aqueous vapour travelled apace. Now and again slanting lines of rain revealed where a storm was sweeping along,

and now and again the distance would be sponged out by a passing shower. Rain storms (to parody the poet laureate) to the right of us, rain storms to the left of us, rain storms in front of us, but so far, by curious good fortune, we had escaped without a single drop, and as we drove along we watched with unabated interest the ever changing cloud forms, great banks of cumulus, gathering fold upon fold in ominous grandeur, their forms and outlines ever changing; anon a momentary gleam of sunlight would gild their wreathing crests, then all would be grey and gloom again, and a dreariness would be cast over the landscape. As the wind freshened an extra gust would ever and again drive a fir cone or a portion of a branch right into the phaeton. One great piece of dead wood crashed down on to the road just after we had passed; had we been a few seconds earlier, it might have brought our journey to an unpleasant ending; and we were not sorry in time to get away from the trees into a more open heath land, though the further we progressed the rougher became our way. The surface of the road was of soft sand, making travelling heavy, and there was a plentiful supply of stones about, of all sizes and shapes, from that of a miniature boulder to a moderate-sized flint. But though the road was bad—wretchedly bad, to use no worse an adjective—we felt that we could hardly complain, as it was really the only bit of bad road we had experienced since we left home, and what better had we a right to expect over a bleak untravelled moorland?

We had escaped the wandering storms so far in

a wonderful manner, but as we progressed the road showed signs of heavy rain ; great pools of water stood in the ruts, the surface was soft and running with moisture, on either side the streams were swollen into tiny torrents. Just as we were congratulating ourselves upon our escaping the wet, down came the rain in a regular deluge, or rather a combination of rain and hail ; it rebounded from off the road, and the horses, stung by the icy darts, pranced about so that, what with the blinding rain and our struggling steeds, it was as much as we could manage to keep on the road. The water ran off our aprons on either side of the phaeton in miniature cascades, and tested the weatherproof qualities of our mackintoshes to the utmost. It was a wild wet drive—we were passing through a vast unenclosed heath, of shelter there was none, a few wind-blown trees here and there, and that was all—but because of its very wildness we enjoyed the drive exceedingly. It was worth even the risk of a wetting to watch the storm sweep along, bending the trees before it. The landscape had a dark dreary look, brightened only by lonely pools on the moorland ; then as the storm spent its fury, the cloud above us seemed to lift, the horizon in front grew lighter, the air became warmer, the sun suddenly burst forth, and the long grasses and fir trees seemed as though they were sprinkled with diamonds, as the sun's rays caught the countless raindrops thereon and converted them into glowing jewels. The effect was striking as we looked back and saw the dark purple cloud gradually dispersing in rain, with the sun glorifying it (it is almost worth



while to live for a time in a wet, stormy climate, such as the Western Highlands, if only to study the magnificent cloud and atmospheric effects), and for the rare beauty of that moment we rejoiced in the wet.

By our lonely road at one spot we came to a solitary wooden shanty that would not have disgraced America. Indeed the wild desolate-looking country around, the rough roadway, and the primitive dwelling, reminded us much of somewhat similar homes, set in similar scenery, we had beheld in the Western territories of America.

The warm cheerful sunshine, the golden lights and purple-grey shadows, came as a great contrast with the dreary grey world we had so lately traversed ; the wild waste looked even lovely, the lonely leaden pools had become golden, the gloomy greys had turned to purples, and the landscape was full of colour.

Uphill now our road led us towards the setting sun, and on the crest of the rise stood out, almost black against the luminous sky, a clump of Scotch firs. This lonely, darksome group of trees impressed us ; if the sky was clear, the wind still blew, and as it soughed through their branches eerily, it seemed almost as though the very spot were haunted by the spirits of long-departed highwaymen, who ended their exciting career on the gibbet that formerly stood here. For in ' the good old times ' this far-spreading heath was a favourite resort of such men, and doubtless nervous travellers blessed their stars when they were safely over it without any misadventure. An old writer relates, *à propos* of high-

waymen and gibbets, that two certain famous 'knights of the road' once met beneath one of these latter structures. 'Ah!' said the first, 'what a fine profession ours would be, if there were no gibbets!' 'Fool!' replied the other; 'gibbets are the making of us, for if there were no gibbets, everyone would be a highwayman, and where then should we be?' Anyway it is well that both gibbets and highwaymen are things of the past. A gibbet could not have been a pleasant sight to come suddenly upon, driving along alone in the olden days.

Gaining the top of the hill, a glorious prospect opened out before us; a vast far-spreading landscape of hill and dale, of wood and river. A grand panorama it was, stretching away from green to grey and grey to blue. A sense of mystery lay over it seen in the half light of the solemn uncertain gloaming, for the evening was coming on; a shadowy land, uncertain and undefined, it was like those one sees in dreams. A feeling came over us, not to be analysed nor set into mere words, as though we were just about to descend and explore a new country—the unknown is full of possibilities. Not a house nor a building of any kind was to be seen from our vantage height, only woods, hills, and a winding river threading its way through the mystic landscape like a ribbon of gold. We might have been about to enter upon an uninhabited country. There was a certain feeling of fascination in letting our romantic imaginings, for once, have full play: half of the beauties of a landscape consist in the poetry we put into it. As we look at Nature so she looks

back at us. A true artist sees a picture almost everywhere; some people can never see one at all till a painter has revealed it to them.

Descending the hill and ascending another, we arrived at a straggling dimly lighted village, with a church prominently set on a height—a grey old fane with the usual round tower; then another steep and long descent brought us to the ancient and romantic little town of Thetford, once the capital of East Anglia and the seat of a bishopric. Here we patronised the Bell Inn, a very ancient and old-fashioned hostelry, with a half-timbered upper story projecting the whole of its length. We could discover no date on the building, but judged it to be of the sixteenth century. Doubtless it was formerly a coaching house of some importance, but when we were there the only conveyance we saw in the spacious yard was an antiquated omnibus. Our cosy little sitting-room here had a curious staircase all to it itself communicating directly with our bedroom just above. Such a peculiar arrangement we had never met with before; we presumed that this was not originally thus, but was the outcome of alterations made from time to time in the rambling structure to suit varying needs.

As Thetford appeared to be an interesting place, we determined to make a later start next day than usual, so as to have time to inspect the town and surroundings. First we found our way to the ruins of the abbey, founded by Roger Bigod in 1104; these stand in a pleasant position by the riverside, but are too ruinous to be of much interest save to

the enthusiastic antiquary. Here in mid-stream we saw an angler sitting in a punt waiting for a nibble. We watched him for some time, but no nibble came; nevertheless there he sat smoking his pipe, the very picture of contentment—or laziness. When we drove out of the town some three hours later, there still sat our patient angler watching his idle float. Surely the gentle fisherman has learnt the rare art of contentedly doing nothing.

Much for my sport I cannot say,  
Though, mind, I like the fun :  
Here have I sat the livelong day,  
Without extracting one.

The gentle craft has a certain strange fascination for some men. I know of one (the most energetic and restless of mortals, over-active in mind and body, who never seems happy unless he is on the move), who became enamoured of the sport, and now he will take his rod to some quiet stream or hire a punt on the Thames, and there he will stay the whole long summer day, patience personified. For myself I must say, to enjoy fishing I like to catch fish, but all anglers are not similarly minded, fortunately for them. Upon one occasion I went out with a friend for a day's salmon fishing; we neither of us caught anything, though my companion was an old hand with the rod. In very truth we had only one rise between us. I got at last somewhat weary of sport without any sport, but my friend vowed that we had had a very 'jolly' day, and what more, asked he, could I wish?

From the abbey ruins we wandered to what is



AN ANGLER'S INN



locally called the Castle Hill, though there is no castle there, and probably never was—at least history gives no record of any. The hill consists of a singular and mighty rounded mound of earth, grass-grown now, with very steep sides, and over a hundred feet in height; manifestly the remains of an ancient British stronghold of much importance in its day. These prehistoric remains interested us much; the construction of them must have been a vast undertaking in those far-off times. The mound is now crowned by trees; the climb to the top of it over the short grass we found, even with the help of a stick, to be a task. Properly defended, in an age before gunpowder, this mighty earthwork must have been almost impregnable.

We had a delightful day on which to continue our journey. The thunder had cleared the air, and the weather, though cool and cloudy, gave every promise of being fine; the rain moreover had laid whatever dust there might have been. As we found by glancing at our maps that we were only an easy stage from the ancient and historic town of Bury St. Edmunds, we determined to make our way thither in order to see the notable ruins of its once magnificent abbey.

Leaving Thetford we managed to get on the wrong road at starting. Not a difficult matter in the absence of sign-posts, and owing to the fact that few people one meets nowadays are able to direct the stranger as to his way out of towns. Natural enough this in an age when everybody travels by train. It was provoking getting wrong thus, as we much wished to see the famous ruins at Bury. Had it not

been for this fact, we should simply have contentedly continued on the wrong road, and have let it lead us whither it would, for there is a certain fascination in wandering along an unknown road, through an unknown country, with only the vaguest of notions as to whither it will eventually take you. We followed a road thus once whilst touring in the wilds of Devon, and we thoroughly enjoyed the excitement of the thing, but for such exploits fine weather is most desirable. It is not very pleasurable to be caught amongst the winding mazes of country lanes in the wet, and perchance find yourself miles from anywhere, with no friendly inn within a reasonable distance. But given a fine day, there is a certain charm in striking upon a strange road and letting it take you whither it will ; and often it does lead you unexpectedly into the most strange out-of-the-way spots and odd places, that you would never have otherwise come upon, for it is just these very unexplored nooks and quaint corners of the land that never get described in the average run of guide-books. Well do I remember on another occasion, whilst exploring an unknown road in the West of England, my delight on suddenly coming upon a curious, old-fashioned, little decayed coaching town, full of quaint and curious old buildings, delightful to look upon singly or grouped as a whole. In the sleepy, spacious main street of the little town stands a grand old coaching inn, a perfect picture of an old-time hostelry. The ancient building has its traditions too, and there is a chamber shown in which Cromwell slept. As this charming old English town is six miles from a railway station, I think that I may safely



reveal its name without the danger of spoiling it, especially as its charms are of the poetic and unsensational kind and consequently have but little attraction in the eyes of the *genus* excursionist. The name of the place is Broadway, and it is in Worcestershire. The town abounds in pictures and picturesque 'bits' that so please the eye of an artist, and I frequently see in exhibitions paintings of its ancient and time-toned buildings. Strangely enough, attracted by the name of 'Broadway,' some American artists once visited it, and so fell under the influence of the place with its old-world charm, that they have come to it year after year since, and now and again in 'Harper's Magazine' I recognise a quaint gable, an odd nook, and even once the old inn of Broadway itself, appearing amongst the illustrations of that popular periodical.

But I have wandered far afield from our Suffolk road, for on leaving Thetford we said good-bye to picturesque Norfolk. It is a most picturesque county, and the quiet beauty of its scenery is none the less beautiful because so little famed, and to us all the more delightful because of the marked absence of the professional tripper. Once having discovered the right road to Bury (we found that the country people for brevity omitted the St. Edmunds), we were careful by constantly consulting our maps to keep to it. What a blessing it would be were the useful old-fashioned sign-posts to be re-erected on the roads! but I fear that there is but little chance of this now.

Again we found ourselves driving through a wild

open country, a country of spreading heaths and breezy commons, that looks much now as it did when the Normans of old came to possess the land. On the first heath we came to we noticed a gipsie's encampment (a very paradise for gipsies this wild unenclosed country, with few inhabitants and no rural policemen to trouble them). One of the women-kind came forward and offered to tell our fortune: we declined, but concluded a bargain with her that we should be allowed to take a photograph of the camp. Some time afterwards we found that, by an accident that will now and then happen to the best regulated photographer, we had exposed a plate upon the camp that had been previously exposed upon a church, and upon developing this plate we discovered to our dismay two pictures oddly combined in one; a curiosity, certainly, but alas! not a picture, the gipsies, tent, and belongings being mixed up in an incomprehensible manner with a church porch and tombstones.

There are few photographic mistakes more provoking than this exposing of two pictures on the same plate; once, however, a friend of mine secured a strangely curious result by such a mishap. This friend was taking some pictures at a little seaside town. One of his plates was exposed upon the quaint old high street of the place, and afterwards (by the same oversight we made) was again exposed upon some shipping, the combined effect of the two photographs being that of a steam tug towing a coal brig right down the centre of the street.

Our road continued to take us through a wild and open country; the spaces on either side of the

way were grass-grown, showing little traffic ; the surface was rutty and stony. But the very wildness and loneliness of our way was a source of infinite delight to us ; there is a charm about untamed Nature that trim garden or well-kept park can never give. The fresh breezy day and cloudy sky too were in harmony with the landscape, that save for the road bore no trace or hint of man. The rugged moors, the wind-swept heaths, and spreading gorse-besprinkled commons, are very pleasing by their marked contrast with the finished look of the general English country, and come as a relief to the tidy hedgerows and carefully tilled fields. The eye delights to roam in unaccustomed freedom whither it will, unarrested by long lines of bordering fences.

We neither met nor passed a soul during our drive till we came to the pretty little village of Ingham. At this village we pulled up to inspect the church, apparently recently restored. There was not much of interest to note in it, save an old Norman lead-lined font and some fine bits of ancient stained glass in the windows of the porch.

On our way we observed an old notice board with the following alarming inscription :

**TRESPASSERS WILL BE PERSECUTED**

**ACCORDING TO THE UTMOST RIGOUR OF THE LAW.**

Doubtless the village hand who painted this intended nothing so dreadful, but not having had the advantage of a School Board education he had confused 'persecuted' with 'prosecuted.' Speaking of

School Boards, by the way, we noticed, in the smaller shops of the various towns and villages that we passed through, a supply of printed matter for the rising generation (who can now all read) that suggested grave material for consideration. Such works in penny and twopenny publications as 'Jack Sheppard,' 'The Black Band,' 'The Bold Highwayman,' and the like, simply abounded, and we were told had a large sale. Having taught the people to read, it is not agreeable to note their literary tastes. Improving books they have little mind for; the lives of working men's families are uneventful, they demand for their reading something sensational, and they get it. Even the old favourite stories of 'Robinson Crusoe,' 'Gulliver's Travels,' etc., have no chance against the fabled exploits of Jack Sheppard and other similar rogues, spicily illustrated. We got into conversation one day with a lad we observed sitting on a gate devouring one of these penny dreadfuls. In the course of some remarks we asked him what he would like to be when he became a man. 'I should like to be a highwayman,' was the innocent reply. It may sound like a cry of 'Backward ho!' but I really think that it would be well were paper and printing not such cheap luxuries.

Our lonely road that day abounded in beauty bits, and our camera was in constant requisition. Our photographic outfit added greatly to the interest and pleasure of our wanderings; having an instantaneous shutter and plates, we were enabled to secure some of the more transient effects of Nature, which are ever the most beautiful. Besides, we had not to wait

for the wind to be still lest our foliage should be blurred ; and what can be more charming than to catch the varied and graceful curves of trees bending before the breeze, the ripple upon the water, the cattle grazing in the field, the shepherd tending his flock, the farmer's team returning home, the ever varying and always picturesque life around an old English farmstead ? But it must be remembered that a lens of itself will not make a picture. It is not enough to point a camera at an object and straight-way take it ; this will result in a photograph truly, but, except by rarest chance, not in a picture. Yet there is no reason why a photograph should not be a picture in black and white, if the lens is used with brains. How many photographs are pictures ? Not one in a thousand, or ten thousand for that matter.

Photographs as a rule fail lamentably in pictorial effect and sadly lack the charm of mystery. In them all objects are, but too often, sharply defined, things distant as well as things near at hand, as though one viewed Nature through a telescope ; the eye is overburdened with detail, and wanders restlessly all over the photograph. We found that our most pleasing pictures were secured by putting the subject very slightly out of focus ; thus we obtained a feeling of mystery—something was left for the imagination to supply.

As a rule photographs have their lights too much scattered, the minor and less interesting objects being asserted as plainly as the more picturesque and important ones. It may be that it is a bit of ugly straight wall that is thus brought prominently forth,

spoiling an otherwise excellent composition. Such an object an artist would either conveniently hide in shade or improve away altogether, but this the less favoured photographer cannot do. We found, however, that by toning down the majority of stray lights, the general spotty look of a photograph was in a great measure avoided, and breadth secured. The very perfection of a modern lens, unless most skilfully employed, is fatal to the production of really artistic work, the more especially as, having such a lens, the photographer prides himself above all upon the sharpness of his focus, forgetful of the fact that the eye can see only one portion of a view at a time. We do not want to count every leaf on a tree or every stone in a building; art was not given us for that.

Clouds too, that so enhance the beauty of a scene, should, whenever possible, be secured. A cloudless sky has a bare appearance and wants interest. Also the genuine rustic adds greatly to the charm and natural look of a country scene, and should be got into the picture when practicable, but he must be at his ease, and not manifestly standing to 'be took,' staring straight at the camera. Far better altogether away than thus. Rustic figures, though easy to secure by the judicious expenditure of a few coppers, are difficult to deal with successfully, but we managed them in this wise. Having secured our rustic, we placed him where required, being careful not to pose him; then, whilst he stood ready as stiffly and awkwardly as possible, we pretended to take him—pretended merely, for though we uncapped our lens we kept the lid of our slide undrawn. Then we would

recap our lens and talk to him about all sorts of things, and when he assumed a careless natural attitude we would quietly touch the spring of our instantaneous shutter, the result being a picture in black and white, though a photograph.

Most figures introduced into photographs, as I have before remarked, suggest the idea that they are merely standing where they are to have their likenesses taken, the landscape becoming a mere background to a portrait. Such figures are in the landscape truly, but not of it ; they lend no interest to it, tell no story, and irritate rather than please the eye. Photography has too long been a science ; let us hope that some day it may become an art. The mere mechanical production of a photograph is a simple matter ; picture-making by aid of the lens and camera requires something more than mechanical skill—it requires the feeling and eye of an artist.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Bury St. Edmunds—Mr. Pickwick a Personality—At the Sign of the Angel—An Old-fashioned Host—English-grown Tobacco—St. Edmund's Ruined Abbey—Curious Relics—The Monks of old—'For England's Ancient Liberties'—An Embalmed Warrior—The Abbot's Bridge—A Lock of Mary Tudor's Hair—A Gruesome Volume—A Splendid Norman Tower—Origin of Gothic Architecture—A Magnificent Church—Flint Buildings—A Wonderful Roof—A Ghastly Tomb—Old Brasses and New Ones—A Quaint Epitaph.

ARRIVING at Bury St. Edmunds, it was a pleasant change to find ourselves once more, after our long and lonely stage, amongst the cheerful homes of men. It will be remembered that the worthy Mr. Pickwick visited Bury during his travels; I quote from Dickens's immortal work. 'The coach rattled through the well-paved streets of a handsome little town of thriving and cleanly appearance, and stopped before a large inn situated in a wide open street nearly facing the old abbey "And this," said Mr. Pickwick, looking up, "is the Angel. We alight here, Sam."' And it was at the Angel that Sam Weller was 'took in' by Job Trotter.

Finding that this ancient inn was still existing, we determined to take up our quarters there. It happened that we arrived on a day when a flower show was being held in the town, so that when we drove in to the ample courtyard of the Angel we



discovered it to be full of carriages, coachmen, and footmen in various liveries, giving the place quite a gay, bustling look, in strange contrast with the deserted appearance of inn yards generally, save in country towns upon a market-day. This gathering of carriages afforded us some idea of the aspect that these old courtyards must have presented to our road-travelling forefathers.

Strolling into the cosy bar of our inn during the evening we found our worthy landlord installed there; a landlord of the old-fashioned school was he, in keeping with his ancient hostelry. We joined him in a pipe and glass of whisky as an excuse for a chat. I may here state that we had already made acquaintance with our good-natured host, for whilst we were at dinner he came into the room to see to our entertainment, manifestly taking a personal interest in the welfare of his guests. Such little attentions are very pleasing, and we felt at once that 'our lines had fallen in pleasant places.' Said we, as we took a seat and lighted our pipe, 'Is this not the very hotel in which the famous Mr. Pickwick is supposed to have stayed?' 'Supposed!' replied the landlord, indignantly; 'this, sir, is the inn where he stopped. I've the very carving knife and fork that that gentleman used when he was here; ivory-mounted they are, they go with the hotel, and were handed to me when I took it.' We were quite unprepared for this reply. Here again we found fiction so strong as to be believed a fact, the clever creation of the novelist turned into a reality! Manifestly the landlord was in earnest when he made his

remark, and how could we doubt the circumstance of Mr. Pickwick's individuality and his former presence here, when our worthy host had actually in his possession, treasured as a precious relic, the very 'ivory-mounted' knife and fork that he had used? Surely a greater compliment than this no writer of fiction could desire or expect!

Our host told us that he came from Newmarket, and that he had formerly kept an inn there; he well remembered the old coaching days, and related to us many anecdotes connected therewith. 'I hear as how you are driving across country,' he remarked, 'so I sent over to a friend and borrowed an old road book as I thought might interest you;' and he handed to us a curious work of ancient date. I merely mention this fact to show what interest the landlords of these old-time inns take in their guests. We were no mere number here, left to the tender mercies of a waiter, who generally appears most anxious as to your welfare when you are about to depart and the time for the inevitable tip approaches.

Then our host said, 'You must have a look in the morning at the curious vaulted cellars under the hotel. There are not many people who have seen them; they used to be the cellars belonging to the monks, and a secret passage led under the road from the abbey to them. You must not go away without seeing them.' And we made a mental note that we would not. Presently, one by one several tradesmen of the place came in, and the conversation became general. One of these brought with

him a sample of home-grown British tobacco, dark in colour and strong in flavour. The sample was tried, and universally condemned. Feeling that the character of the home production was at stake, I came to the rescue, venturing to remark that I had grown tobacco in a garden at Eastbourne which was light in colour and mild in flavour.

There are few inns in pleasant England so charmingly situated as the Angel at Bury St. Edmunds. Our sunny room looked right down upon the gardens and picturesque remains of the once far-famed abbey, 'whose mould'ring ruins mark her fallen state.' The ancient time-toned abbey gateway and the hoary grey and weathered walls contrast most charmingly with the fresh green of the sward and trees around. Only one other hotel in England do I know that has such a romantic outlook, and that is the little rural inn at Tintern, which is perhaps the most pleasantly situated hostelry in all the land.

Early in the morning we started out to view the ruins at our leisure and inspect the old historic town. We found that the landlord had not forgotten us. 'A friend of mine,' he said, 'will be very pleased to go round about and show you what is most interesting in the place, if you would care to have some one with you.' We could not well refuse such a kindly meant offer, and though we would rather have wandered about alone, we submitted, 'on this occasion only,' to be personally conducted. Placing ourselves therefore under the tender mercies of our guide, we were first taken to the abbey grounds.

These we entered by a grand old gateway—a unique structure in decorated Gothic, a clever and curious combination of a gracefully ornamented tower and a strong fortress. The early abbots, it would appear, were highly esteemed by the local people, but as the monastery grew powerful and prosperous, the monks, to whom was granted supreme authority over the town, became tyrannical, so that the love of them was turned into bitter hatred and fear, till at last in the early part of the fourteenth century the discontent of the population at their harsh rule showed itself in an open revolt. The inhabitants around, rising in a body, attacked the abbey and wrought great destruction to it, ill-treating the monks, and destroying the gateway. The new gateway was thereupon planned as a fortress tower; the images standing in the niches concealed slits for the archers behind, and the gates, we learn, were of iron, massive and strong for defence, and covered with brass for ornament.

The former grandeur of this once renowned abbey is attested by the vast extent of ground that it and the buildings connected therewith occupied, the whole being encircled and protected by high walls, which in greater part still remain, with many entrance gateways, like unto a miniature mediæval town. Leland, who saw the abbey when in the full glory of its prime, just before the Dissolution, thus describes it: ‘One might even think the monastery alone a city; so many gates has it, some whereof are brass, so many towers; and a church than which nothing can be more magnificent.’ Truly the

abbey church, dedicated to Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Holy Martyr St. Edmund, must have been a splendid structure. Indeed, it was compared by contemporary writers to Solomon's Temple for its grandeur and surpassing beauty ; the high altar, we are told, was constructed of solid silver and porphyry, a presentation from Pope Alexander II., at which ' mass might be celebrated, even were the whole kingdom under ban of major excommunication.' According to a paper read before the Royal Archæological Society by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, ' This great abbey drew round itself wealth and power, and brought the most proud and haughty monarchs to tremble at its shrine—drew a considerable town around it—attracted kings and queens and parliaments to its precincts—expelled all other spiritual and secular jurisdiction that it might reign supreme—filled the place with some of the finest architectural triumphs of succeeding ages, Norman, Decorated, and Perpendicular—made it an object of ambition to the greatest nobles to belong to the fraternity and to be buried within its hallowed walls—and all this on account of its possessing the body of an obscure and petty king of East Anglia, who had been slain by the Danes.'

It will be remembered (though in honesty I am obliged to confess that, until our guide related the tradition for our special benefit, we were scandalously ignorant, respecting it) that St. Edmund was the last King of East Anglia, and was murdered, or martyred as the monks had it, by the Danes in 870, or thereabouts. After a terrible battle at

Thetford, which lasted the whole of the day, from the rising to the setting of the sun, the Saxons were utterly routed, and King Edmund, their leader, fled into a wood, but was pursued and captured by the victorious invaders, who, enraged at their heavy losses in the struggle, tied the vanquished king to a tree, and shot him to death with their arrows, till his body was covered with darts, 'like a porcupine with quills,' then they cut off the unfortunate king's head, and threw it away in another and distant part of the wood. After the Danes had left the locality, some of the king's friends went in search of the body to give it Christian burial, and were horrified to discover it headless, but continued their quest in the hope of finding the missing part.

Wandering about the woods their attention was arrested by a voice crying out 'Here, here !' Being thus attracted to the spot whence the voice came, to their astonishment they discovered the king's head in a thicket of thorns, jealously guarded by a wolf. The head was laid temporarily by the side of the body and in a miraculous manner became reunited to it, a line of red only marking the place of juncture. The remains of the king were thereupon buried with Christian rites at Hoxne. After a time many miracles were reported as having been performed there, and the body was translated to a large wooden church at Bury, that had been prepared to receive it, and from this ancient wooden fane sprang the majestic and glorious abbey, renowned for its wealth and magnificence all over the Christian world. Where now is the relic of the

saint and king? Its virtues do not seem to have protected it, nor to have saved the abbey in its hour of need.

It may be interesting here to note some of the precious relics that were discovered by the Commissioners at the time of the Dissolution. Here then is a short list of sundry of these. 'Some of the coles that St. Lawrence was toasted withal: the paryings of St. Edmund's nails, his shirt, banner, sworde, one of his sinews, and some of his hair: St. Thomas à Becket's penne-knyff and his bootes: divers sculls for the cures of varous diseases: peces of the holie crosse enough to make a whole crosse: and many other reliques for superticious usages.' A pretty list, in truth! It is curious to observe how well the monks of Bury were supplied with 'peces of the holie crosse,' and the question arises whence came the numerous other true pieces of the Holy Cross that were exhibited to the faithful in the multitude of churches scattered over Christendom. One mediæval writer and traveller states that he had beheld sufficient pieces of the *genuine* cross to more than load a big ship. Well might the honest Charles Kingsley become indignant when speaking of 'the sham relics with which the people were humbugged.'

Of your spectral puppet play  
I have traced the cunning wires;  
Come what will, I needs must say,  
God is true, and ye are liars.  
When the thought of man is free,  
Error fears its lightest tones;  
So the priests cried 'Sadducee!'  
And the people took up stones.

But to do the monks justice, if in the hour of their prosperity they became luxurious, tyrannical, indulgent, and scandalously imposed upon the credulity of a simple people, they were not always so. Once they boldly, fearlessly stood up for the weak against the strong, for the people's rights and liberties against a proud and powerful oppressor, and this great act of theirs will live and be recorded to their honour as long as English history lasts. This abbey was the scene of one of the most important events in our 'rough island's story.' On the 20th of November, in the year 1214, the ecclesiastics and barons assembled here, convened by that 'high-souled priest' Cardinal Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and standing uncovered before the high altar, swore a solemn oath that they would extract from King John the ancient liberties of the people, which oath resulted in their compelling that reluctant monarch to sign the Magna Charta at Runnymede. Then,

Robed in their pontificals,  
 England's ancient prelates stood,  
 For the people's right and good.  
 Close around the waiting crowd,  
 Dark and still, like winter's cloud :

Stood to hear the priest rehearse  
 In God's name the Church's curse,  
 By the tapers round them lit,  
 Slowly, sternly uttering it.  
 ' Right of voice in framing laws,  
 Right of peers to try each cause ;  
 Peasant homestead, mean and small,  
 Sacred as the monarch's hall—  
 Whoso layeth hand on these,  
 England's ancient liberties,



Let him live and die accursed.  
Thou, who to thy church hast given  
Keys alike of hell and heaven,  
Make our word and witness sure,  
Let the curse we speak endure !'  
Silent, whilst that curse was said,  
Every bare and listening head  
Bowed in reverent awe, and then  
All the people said Amen !

On one of the crumbling, ruined walls of the once stately abbey, near to where the gorgeous high altar stood, is a tablet recording the fact of the gathering of the barons there, and giving their names and titles, most of which are now extinct. Another tablet relates the discovery by workmen digging on the spot, and the reinterment, of the embalmed body of Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, second son of 'Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster.' According to this, though three hundred and fifty years had passed away since the body was buried, upon its discovery in 1772 it was found 'in the most perfect state of preservation. At that time one of the hands was obtained . . . and is now deposited in the Royal College of Surgeons, London.'

One of the most picturesque bits of the ruin is the ancient Abbot's Bridge, of three small arches, which supports the old boundary wall where it crosses the little river Lark, which receives the waters of the lesser Linnet. Curious that these two streams should bear the names of birds! The arches of the bridge are groined and are very low ; they appear to have supported a foot-bridge as well as the wall. The structure is exceedingly picturesque,

a quaint specimen of olden architecture ; the monkish builders, whenever they had the opportunity, delighted in the quaint and grotesque. Some of the better preserved portions of the ruined monastery have been reroofed and converted into private residences, but the modern plate-glass sash windows set in the ancient time-toned flint walls give a strangely incongruous aspect to the dwellings. This juxtaposition of the new and the old is more curious than pleasing.

From the ruined abbey we were conducted to the museum, and there I must acknowledge that our guide was of service in that he was able to give us something of the history of the chief objects of interest, and particulars as to where and when they were discovered, and as he had benefited by the remarks of sundry learned antiquaries that he had conducted over the building from time to time, his observations were of more value than the statements of guides generally are.

The majority of the contents of the museum are much the same as one finds in similar local institutions ; there are the usual collection of Roman urns, coins, tear-bottles, bits of tiles and pavement, dug up in the neighbourhood. Besides these, one of the chief objects of interest in the collection is a lock of light flaxen hair enclosed in a glass locket, and which our guide assured us once belonged to Mary Tudor, and we could not say otherwise. We were next shown some stays made of iron, which were worn by ladies in the reign of Henry VIII., and more uncomfortable-looking articles of dress could

hardly be devised. Indeed at first sight we actually thought that they were some instrument of torture ; and perhaps they were, for what will not ladies suffer to be fashionable ?

We saw also an interesting collection of leaden crosses, with various inscriptions thereon ; these were found in the cemetery allotted to the monks, who were interred without coffins, but each of whom had one of these crosses placed on his body when buried. Then our guide said in a low confidential voice that led us to expect great things, ' I will now show you the greatest curiosity we have. A unique book of which there is no similar copy existing.' Our expectations were raised to the highest point, nor were they lessened when we saw him open the carefully locked bookcase, and take therefrom a small volume from a hiding-place at the back. ' We have to be very particular about this,' he remarked, ' for fear that it should get stolen.' What rare work could it be that we had come upon thus unexpectedly, we wondered, and that was treasured so highly ? Then he placed the book in our hands, and asked us to remark the binding. It appeared of some kind of leather, but not being experts in bookbinding, we could see nothing particular about it, or wherein it differed from other bindings of the same class. Then our guide remarked slowly, that due effect might be given to his utterance, ' It's bound in tanned human skin ! Look inside,' and he took the book, opened it, and we read ' The binding of this book is the skin of the murderer William Corder, taken from his body and tanned by myself in the year

1828. George Creed, Surgeon to the Suffolk Hospital.' The rare volume turned out to be nothing less than a long account of the trial of this said William Corder for a terrible murder committed at Bury. Our guide was manifestly disappointed that we showed no signs of enthusiasm over the highly prized volume with its gruesome binding. 'Most people think it a great curiosity,' he remarked disappointedly; 'look here at what the Rev J. M. Bellew wrote in it, when it was shown to him; and we read the following which that gentleman had been pleased to write there. "The execution done on Cawdor." Drury Lane Theatre, night of execution of W. Corder, when this line was repeated, a man from the gallery exclaimed, "Yes, he was hung this morning at Bury." Anecdote told to the Rev. J. M. Bellew by William Charles Macready. Bury, April 4, 1865.'

At the museum we parted with our guide, and, sketchbook in hand, we proceeded to 'do' the rest of the noteworthy sights of the place on our own account. We first made our way to the grand old Norman tower, built in 1090 by the Abbot Baldwin, which was formerly known as the Great Gateway of St. Edmunds. This unique and well-preserved specimen of Norman architecture is possibly the finest of its kind in the world. It is grandly massive and effective, as though built for all time. How solid and enduring the old Normans made their structures, how they contrast with the mean, flimsy contract work of to-day! If they built not gracefully, they built mightily; they combined

massiveness with simplicity, a style of gloomy grandeur in truth, but always impressive and one that well expresses the austerity of the times. On the front of this grand tower we noticed the crossing of the round Norman arches, forming smaller pointed ones. Doubtless some similar ornamentation suggested the later Gothic arch, and so it may be that the light graceful Gothic was evolved from the stern and solemn Norman. At any rate such a supposition seems quite as reasonable as the far-fetched idea (seriously, however, supported by some good authorities) that Gothic architecture was originally suggested by the interlacing branches of an avenue of trees, though it must be confessed that an avenue of ancient elms, with their trunks doing duty for pillars, bears some distant resemblance to the centre aisle of a cathedral. I use the term 'centre aisle' as one that is frequently though wrongly employed; the word 'aisle' (derived from the Latin *ala*, a wing) means really a side passage separated from a central part, so that in truth the expression 'central aisle' is a meaningless misnomer. The term is, however, convenient even though incorrect, as is also the common saying that the sun rises and sets, when it does nothing of the kind, but stands still whilst the earth turns round.

Near to the old Norman tower stands St. Mary's church, one of the finest churches in all England. The truly magnificent open timber roof here (of the effective 'hammer beam' type), carved in Caen long years ago, is alone worth a special journey to Bury to see. It is truly a most wonderful and

beautiful work, a miracle of skilled craftsmanship, and is said by ecclesiologists to be the most perfect and grandest specimen of its kind now existing, though, in our less learned opinion, the splendid carved roof of the little-known church of Cawston, which we had so lately seen (excepting that it is in a wretched state of repair, or disrepair) is little, if any, inferior to it. Nothing surprised or delighted us more on our journey than the wonderful beauty, not to say grandeur, of some of the remote country churches; seldom visited these by strangers, unless they be enthusiastic antiquaries, for they lie wholly out of the pleasure tourist's track. The exceedingly interesting and once splendid church of Sall (whose former glories are, alas! fast decaying from long neglect) was not even mentioned in our guidebook! Most of these ancient Norfolk fanes, and some of the Suffolk ones, are built of flint, cut and carefully squared, joined and laid together with infinite pains and astonishing accuracy. These old walls and towers, constructed of semi-translucent flint, have a peculiar beauty all their own, a beauty that cannot be approached by ordinary stone, and moreover, flint is the most enduring material that can be employed in building. It does not weather with age; not even granite is so lasting.

The hammer beams of the roof of St. Mary's church are carved to represent various angels, saints, martyrs, kings, and knights. There are no less than forty-two of these in all, each one being a study in itself. Amongst them we noticed St. Lawrence holding a gridiron, St. Edmund, St. Thomas à

Becket, with a goodly company of angels playing on musical instruments, besides bishops, kings, and armoured knights.

This church contains several tombs of interest. In the chancel we came upon a plain marble tablet, with the following inscribed thereon :

Sacred to the Memory of  
MARY TUDOR,  
Third Daugh<sup>r</sup> of Henry y<sup>e</sup> 7th, King of England,  
and Queen of France.  
Who was first married in 1514 to  
Louis y<sup>e</sup> 12th, King of France,  
and afterwards in 1517 to  
Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk.  
She died in his lifetime in 1533,  
At y<sup>e</sup> Manor of Westhorp in this Coun<sup>ty</sup>,  
And was interred in y<sup>e</sup> same year in y<sup>e</sup>  
Monastery of St. Edmund's Bury,  
And was removed into this Church  
After y<sup>e</sup> Dissolution of y<sup>e</sup> Abbey.

The tomb was opened last century. Why, I wonder? Cannot the noble dead be left to rest in peace, undisturbed by the prying inquisitiveness of man? On that occasion one of the churchwardens cut off a lock of the deceased queen's hair, the flaxen lock that we were shown in the museum.

One of the most ancient altar-tombs is to a John Baret, and though interesting is most ghastly to look upon. The body, laid on the top of the monument, is shown as an emaciated corpse, but a too realistic copy of one that had long been buried. The anatomy of the carving is wonderful, and the figure has a kind of morbid attraction that compels you to look at it whether you will or no. I should not care

to attend service in view of that strange, weird memorial of the dead. On it is written in most perplexing English :

Ho that wil sadly beholde me with his ie  
May se hys owyn merowr a lerne for to die.

The figure on that monument haunted us for days long after. And such is the end of poor humanity, with all its wonderful genius, its marvellous inventions, and the rare creations of its brain !

All passes,—Art alone  
Enduring stays to us ;  
The bust outlasts the throne—  
The coin Tiberius.

There are some old brasses in the church, but none of special interest ; there are likewise some modern ones, the over-perfect, precise-cut lettering of which is in marked contrast with the feeling, nervous, distinctly non-mechanical engraving of the old work. There is an individuality about the one ; the inscriptions on it are full of character, like to the writing of a letter. You feel almost something of the personality of the ancient engraver ; the very marks of his tool are still upon them, cut with his own hand. The modern brasses are to the old ones as is a printed leaf to a page of an ancient missal, or the mechanical chromograph to the work of the brush ; and surely they are not so very precious as to need placing upon the wall (where a brass should never be), framed in oak and glazed as they are here ?

As we glanced back on leaving the church, the view we had was most impressive ; the glorious



carved roof above, the soaring columns, the ancient mellowed walls, the pavement below, were charged with countless glowing tints as the softened sunshine shone through the traceried windows of stained glass reflecting their colours over all. In the churchyard here is an old tombstone, the epitaph on which, fast weathering away, is perhaps worth preserving :

Here lies Joan Kitchner ; when her glass was spent,  
She kicked up her heels and away she went.

Then, wandering about, we found our way to the modern Roman Catholic church, a plain structure in the too familiar style of nineteenth-century classic. The interior looked bare to us. What a contrast to the gorgeous fane formerly dedicated to St. Edmund here ! In this church we noticed an alms-box made, so an inscription below informed us, from the wood of the very tree to which St. Edmund was tied when he suffered martyrdom. Was this a nest-egg for future relics, we wondered ? One thing we could not help noting, that whilst all the various inscriptions in the church were in Latin, a language not understood of poor people (and sometimes not always by rich), the requests for money for the church were in very plain English.

## CHAPTER XVII.

A Pleasant Country—Old Toll-gates—The Homes of the People—The Modern and the Last Century Traveller—Home Travel—Ruskin on Railways—A Picturesque Village—An Old Tudor Mansion—An Ancient Moated Manor House—The Beauty of Old Buildings—An Ideal Hostelry—The Coaching Inns of the Past—A Prosperous Farmer—One Result of Agricultural Depression—A Holiday in a Farmhouse.

IN the morning, before leaving our comfortable inn, we were taken down a dark staircase to inspect the groined cellars, which, as I have before remarked, the landlord told us belonged of old to the abbey. In these we had pointed out to us the recesses said to have been used by the monks for the sacramental wines, and the built-up wall where the underground passage from the monastery is supposed to have entered. Possibly these may have been the abbey cellars, but if so, why, when they had so great a quantity of land enclosed, the monks did not construct their cellar within their own walls, instead of going such a distance away, entailing an awkward underground approach, is truly a puzzling problem.

Looking at the stone roofing, as far as we could judge by the uncertain flickering light of a tallow candle, it seemed to us that the groining was rudely done, and not at all like the usual careful masonry of the olden monks. Indeed, as the Angel stands

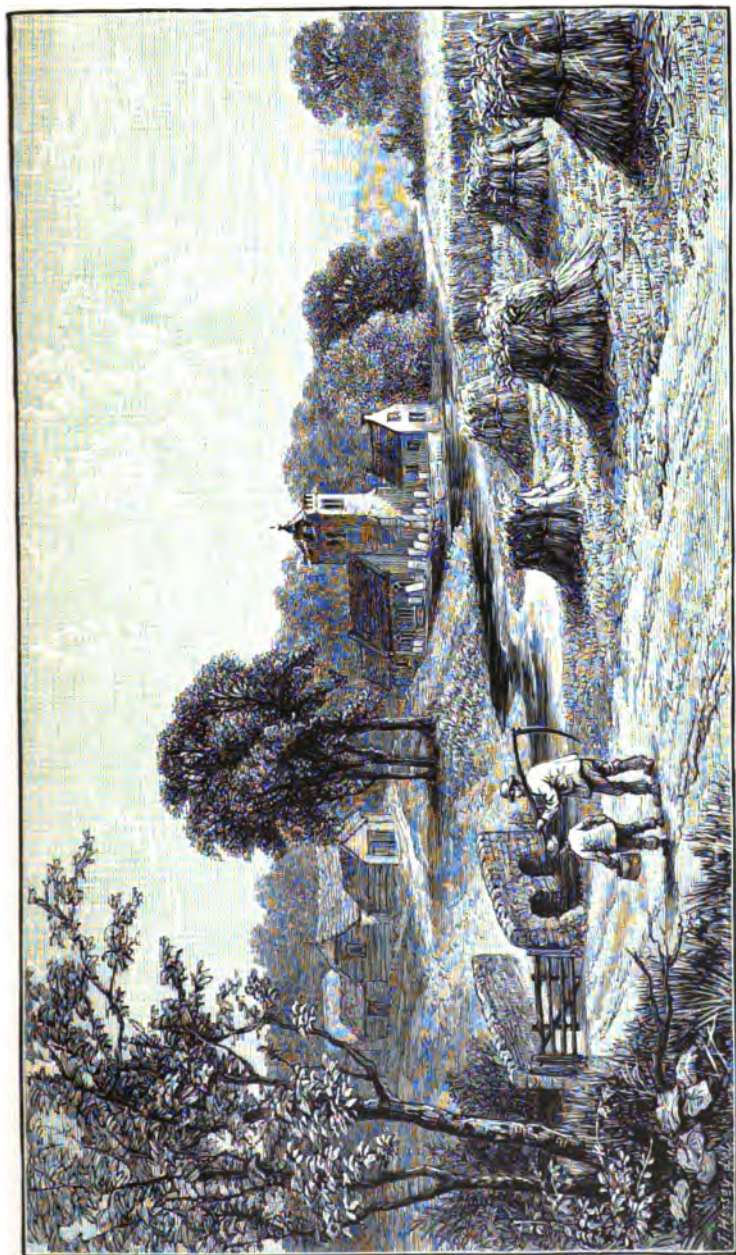
on the site of a still earlier inn, and as we know of several ancient hostels in different parts of the country, with similar rough groined cellars, it seems more probable, in spite of the tradition of the house, that these were merely the cellars of an earlier inn.

As we were leaving, the landlord came to the door to see us off and wish us a prosperous journey in the friendly old-fashioned way. Such little attentions cost nothing, but are very pleasing, and make the traveller feel more like a welcome guest, departing from a country visit, than a mere wanderer in a strange land simply leaving a house of entertainment.

The country around Bury St. Edmunds is pleasantly diversified by wood and water and green fields, by time-toned homes of ancient date that tell of long abiding and give a humanising aspect to the landscape. We had not proceeded far on our way when we came to a very pretty village by the side of a sparkling stream, which stream was crossed by a grey old bridge. Here was an old toll-house, the turnpike-gate being, however, conspicuous by its absence—one of the few old-fashioned and formerly familiar features of the road this latter, whose improvement away we can all rejoice at. The having to pull up ever and again (when driving by road) before a closed gate, whilst the ancient keeper thereof hobbled out to open it, and hobbled in again for change, was not a pleasant experience; and once or twice on a dark night when touring through an unknown country (when such things were), we have

nearly run into one of these closed gates. But if the undesirable turnpike-gates no longer obstruct the traveller, it must be confessed that the gates protecting the level crossings of the railways which have multiplied so throughout the land are still more objectionable, even though you have not to pay for the pleasure of being unexpectedly delayed, for at one of these you must wait till the train, or perhaps trains, have passed. Upon a certain well-remembered occasion in the north country, I was actually detained at a level railway crossing for full a quarter of an hour whilst some shunting was going on, and this in a thunderstorm! On the whole the turnpike-gate is preferable.

Shortly after leaving the village we had a stiff hill to mount. An old weather-beaten windmill at the top of this tempted us to pull up awhile and make a sketch of it, and we lingered long after our drawing was done to enjoy the fine prospect that opened out from there before us. A very charming sketch that old mill made, though the subject was a simple one. How little goes to form a pleasing picture! It may be merely an ancient gnarled oak with moss-grown trunk, or the corner of a tumble-down barn, or a water-mill with its grey-green wheel and sparkling stream by its side, or even a rush-grown pool. Such simple things make far better subjects for a sketch than the most stately buildings reared by man in all their assertive perfection. An ancient thatched cottage, the humbler the better, that has been beautified by age, mellowed and toned by time, and painted by the weather-tints of summer suns and



A SUFFOLK LANDSCAPE



winter storms, how charming is it to the artist's eye ! Pictorially speaking, such an old cottage is far more picturesque and delightful to look upon than the finest palace the world can show. But it is not given to all to see the beauty of the commonplace ; to reveal such to those who cannot see it (even though before their eyes), is the privilege of the artist.

Leaving the old mill we soon came to another charming village, with a fine old half-timbered house standing by the wayside in a companionable manner, not hidden by envious high walls from the gaze of the passer-by. One of the ancient homes of the people this, standing in its own garden, self-contained. Not a grand mansion nor yet an humble dwelling—a house that a decayed nobleman might live in and not be ashamed. Then as we drove along we passed several picturesque cottages. One of these had some yew-trees in front of it, each one cut into quaint shapes, stiff and prim these ; very different indeed from what Nature intended a tree to be, quaint shapes like those that were in vogue long years ago in the ancient gardens of our forefathers, when sundials, terraces, nut-walks, bowling-greens, and simple flowers were the fashion. The greenhouse has given us rarer plants, at more expense, but to my mind none so beautiful as the homely hardy flowers that contented our ancestors. Then in this delightful old-time village we passed another ancient home, built of flint, with a timber and brick gable story boldly projecting in the centre over the porch, both affording shelter and adding a pleasant feature to the building. These old houses are often, though not

always, simple in construction, but their outlines are certain to be vigorous; high-pitched roofs, great gables, clustering chimney-stacks, and an ample porch give even a yeoman's abode an expression of dignity that the mere costly piling up of stones and mortar never can impart.

Journeying on, at the top of another hill a glorious prospect of far-stretching country opened before us; a vast expanse of wooded landscape, fading away from the freshest greens close at hand to the palest blue in the dim dreamy distance. What wonderful revelations of scenery were presented to our forefathers, who travelled by coach or posted through the pleasant land—scenes of rare bewildering beauty that now are seen by hardly any but the very leisured and fortunate few, since everyone is compelled to go by the speedy but unromantic railway! How we pitied the railway traveller that day! The iron way, as it was termed in its early days, is useful and convenient; in this restless age of eternally rushing about hither and thither, we could not exist without it; but it does seem a pity that the fates have so ordained that it should monopolise all the traffic, so that the unequalled loveliness of rural England is now only glanced at by the modern traveller. A hundred-mile drive along the deserted highways will afford to many a revelation of scenery and an experience not readily to be forgotten. To those who have travelled the world over and have seen every country but their own, here is a suggestion. Try England; take one of the old coaching roads and follow it the whole of its length, say from London



to the Land's End, or from London to Edinburgh—or do not follow it, but drive somehow from the former city to one of those destinations, only being careful as far as possible to avoid the neighbourhood of large commercial towns—and I make bold to say that no toilsome wanderings in far-off lands will return such an ample reward of beauty, for in all the world there is not such a lovely country as rural England, nor one that so well repays exploring!

Were Great Britain only three thousand miles away across the stormy Atlantic, how Englishmen of leisure would rush to see it! But as it is here with us at home we leave it for wealthy Americans to take coaching journeys throughout the length and breadth of it, and wonder at their enthusiasm; one of whom said, coming to the end of his pleasant wanderings, that he had been driving through Paradise!

Writing about railways as I have done, I do not wish it to be considered that I am an enemy to them, far from it. I frankly acknowledge their necessity to-day; they are ugly blessings. I only regret that they should have so ruined road travel that the few who would, have no chance of journeying along the pleasant highways and beholding the beauty of the land; it is only the wealthy who can do that now. What a novel and delightful holiday excursion it would make, if the old coaches were only running, to get on one of them and be spun along over hill and dale, stopping now and again at a rural hostel for a change of horses, going, say, to Gloucester and back! It verily makes one's mouth water to think

what a treat such an outing would be. Speaking of railways, perhaps I may be allowed here to quote a letter of Mr. Ruskin's upon them, written in 1887. 'I do not write now further concerning railways, here or elsewhere. They are to me the loathsome form of devilry now extant; animated and deliberate earthquakes, destructive of all wise social habit or possible natural beauty, carriages of damned souls riding on the ridges of their own graves. Ever faithfully yours, John Ruskin.' All of which saying makes my feeble protests against their ugliness, not their utility, seem like milk-and-water. Perhaps whilst we are on the subject it may be of interest to hear how another famous sage, Carlyle, expressed himself concerning a railway journey. Speaking first of the locomotive, he wrote: 'What is it but a metallic devil? whilst the screaming and howling of steam-whistles are like as if a million fiends were running to and fro over the earth.' In respect of Mr. Ruskin it would be interesting to know, when he travels to London from his quiet retreat amongst the mountains, whether he ventures into one of the 'carriages of damned souls,' and is whirled to town by an iron monster breathing fire and smoke, or whether he drives the whole way. If Mr. Ruskin is in no hurry, the drive is a most beautiful one, as we who have gone over the ground by road can testify, and he could spend the spare evenings profitably at the pleasant inns on the way by composing those charming accounts of scenery cunningly interwoven with Art that we all so much enjoy; though why Mr. Ruskin should write certain pamphlets and books

to educate the British workman, and yet make them so expensive and difficult for him to obtain, is a curious problem.

After this long digression let us back once more to the pleasant land of Suffolk. Our road that day was full of interest. Continuing our pilgrimage we reached, after a time, a scattered hamlet standing around a little three-cornered green. On some fallen timber that lay by the side of the rough bit of common sward, ruddy-faced, happy-looking children were playing at 'King of the Castle;' the merry silvery rippling of their laughter made cheerful the country silence. The rough green, the fallen trees, the children romping thereon, with the background of a ruinous cottage backed by leafy elms, might have been cut out of one of Birket Foster's pictures.

The ruinous cottage attracted our attention, for though the plaster was off one gable, the rafters gone so that the rain could come freely in without let or hindrance, still the place was inhabited. Just beneath the exposed gable was a curtained window, and strangely enough of plate glass. The garden was weed-grown, nettles and thistles flourished abundantly therein, and the whole place had a sadly neglected appearance. There was a man ploughing in a field close by; of him we asked about the cottage and why the occupier let it go to ruin so. 'Sure I don't know, sir,' was the reply; 'nobody do; he owns several fields about. One 'ud think as how he'd make it a bit tidy like and weathertight, as it's his own.' Whatever might be the cause of the neglect, it was in one sense picturesque, and we made a very pretty

sketch of the tumbledown cottage, which suggested a larger painting to be entitled the Miser's Home.

Then, with several ups and downs, we entered the much-spread-out village of Long Melford, one of the most charming and picturesque places imaginable, built round a grand open green of several acres (a glorious playground for the youthful inhabitants this). In the centre of the green is an ancient stone conduit ; at the end of it upon a rise stands a remarkably fine old church, whose century-grey walls make the ancient Tudor brick hospital below look exceedingly warm-tinted by contrast.

Around this great green are gathered the homes of the place, an epitome of the homes of England, ranging as they do from the stately and spacious Elizabethan mansion of Melford Hall, down to the lowly thatched cottage. The old hall is a romance in building, seeming more like an artist's ideal than actual reality. The entrance gateway to this is quaint, having two octagon brick towers with square leaded windows on the top, capped by circular stone roofs ; the towers are joined together by a Tudor arch, beneath which is the approach. But there are other curious houses here. One especially arrested our attention ; a long, low, two-story building of brick and timber, the outer gables projecting on brackets, a charming abode. But what interested us most in the old house was the large and wonderfully carved open wooden porch. This had the representation, boldly chiselled out of the wood, of a man and a woman supporting the main timbers ; that porch gave a special character to the whole building.

Long Melford is a village to which the term romantic might justly be applied ; the old portion of it, that is, for as we drove along we came to a modern addition which is unromantic and commonplace enough, consisting as it does of rows of white brick and slate-roofed cottages, built all in a row for economy, each cottage having only a few yards of garden for the same reason. What a startling and sudden contrast with the spacious feeling given by the old-world village adjoining ! Needless to say that we made a long stop at Melford ; it was a place so exactly after our heart. Both sketch-book and camera were called into requisition ; the place was full of pictures.

Near to the village is another fine, ancient, and picturesque mansion, Kentwell Hall. This was built by the once powerful family of the Cloptons, who rest now beneath gorgeous altar-tombs in Melford church. Kentwell Hall, which is approached by a noble avenue of lime trees nearly a mile in length, is a very fine example of a moated manorial mansion of the sixteenth century. The illustration I have given of this grand old English hall will better explain what manner of place it is than pages of prosaic print, so I refrain from further detailed description. Besides the pleasures of sketching from Nature and the delights of picture-making ; one most valuable advantage in being able to draw is the readiness with which the wielder of the pencil can explain to a friend the appearance of a place or the character of a scene. Who can convey in words the precise form and varied outline of a mountain ?

Yet a few touches of the pencil are all that is needed to show this !

What delightful features in the landscape are these old-time English homes, built in the days when building was a living art—beloved of artists for their quaint picturesqueness, and dear to the heart of antiquaries for the histories and traditions that have collected around their ancient walls ! Wherein consists the special charm of these old buildings ? Allowing for their old associations, the gathered glamour of a legendary and historic past, for the bloom of age upon their weathered and time-toned walls—allowing for these, wherein do they differ from the new ? In the first place it seems to me that the architects of old worked up to a noble ideal ; they built grandly, whether it were a lordly palace or merely a humble yeoman's dwelling, for even a barn may be grandly built. Their houses, hall or farmstead, are always picturesque ; it is evident, therefore, that beauty was sought for as well as utility and convenience, as understood at the time. What is the first thing that strikes an observer in an old house ? Is it not the solid substance of it ? The eye beholds nothing mean or flimsy, can trace nothing scamped ; the walls are thick and enduring, the timber has not been spared, the house plainly shows that it is solidly constructed and strong.

The architect of old had not learnt to build on strictly economic principles ; it had never occurred to him to employ a minimum of material, barely sufficient to maintain, with constant repairs, a structure for the paltry term of a ground lease. He had not



A LOADED MANOR HOUSE: KENTWELL HALL, SUFFOLK





so debased his art. He left an ample margin of strength for the necessary weaknesses caused by age and decay ; he gave knowingly an excess of material beyond that sufficient to simply uphold his edifice ; he rejoiced in stability and strength, in the beauty of main form as well as in decorating honest construction ; for though he could restrain himself when needful and understood the virtue of simplicity, he knew that there was even a greater virtue in worthy decoration. Stuck-on ornaments and applied architectural details are not to be found in an old building—at least I have never discovered any upon such, though hardly a modern speculative built house is without.

The architect of the past was a master of his work ; he made the style he employed his servant, he never allowed himself to be its slave ; he imparted to all he did something of his own individuality ; his buildings, though oftentimes quaintly fantastic in parts, had an air of set purpose over all—they were never frivolous. The stately homes of bygone days are frequently richly carved and ornamented, yet in no case have I observed them to be assertively or ostentatiously so ; though, give a modern architect the opportunity, and ten to one he will ruin his elevation by meaningless decoration intended for ornament. In fine the chief secret of the charm of old-time homes is their solid and honest construction, the beauty of their varied and bold outline, and the studied care with which even the smallest detail is carried out, the right proportion of height to width (scarcely considered now), the changeful-

ness of form in the one building, windows varying in shape, design, and size, the great clustering chimney-stacks, so grouped together originally for strength, but a necessity made into an effective and pleasing feature, the mighty gables, designed first of all to throw off rain and snow, and carved for beauty after. Yes, these old architects built poems! to-day our best is but dull prose.

We left Long Melford, with its stately homes, picturesque green, old-world hostelries, and pretty cottages, with regret. As we saw it on that bright sunny day it seemed to us an ideal village, too romantic almost to be real. There was nothing particular to note on the short stage to Sudbury, unless it were a picturesque peep we had of an old timbered bridge over a little river to the right of our way, of which structure an artist might make a very pleasing picture.

Arriving at Sudbury we drove up to the Rose and Crown, surely the perfection of an old-fashioned hostelry, with its quaint open galleries running around its glass-covered courtyard. This courtyard we found gay with flowers and musical with the songs of caged birds; a pleasant welcome this to the traveller. We were shown into a delightfully cool sitting-room here, our simple meal was served on a scrupulously clean cloth, the maid who waited upon us was a pattern of civility, and the clear nut-brown ale that accompanied our repast was, we deemed, a drink fit for a king.

Oh! the pleasantness of these old English inns when they have retained, as in the present case,

something of their past prosperity, and have therefore been kept up and cared for; how suggestive they are of taking one's ease, how restful, how home-like! and this last, I take it, is the greatest praise of all. Alas! unfortunately there is another and not quite so pleasing a side to the picture. Some of the old country inns, that were doubtless all that could be desired in the days of road travel, have sadly degenerated, owing to the little custom they now have, and to the change in the class of custom. Hostelries that were built to accommodate comfortably a large number of travellers, and that in the olden times were profitably patronised, have now perhaps, during a whole week, only one or two stray guests staying overnight therein, if as many. The extensive range of stabling, once kept in the pink of order, is probably half deserted; some portion of it being given over to inevitable decay, uncared for now, the home of mice and cobwebs. The few stalls retained in decent repair are mostly for the use of farmers or commercial travellers, and perhaps the local carrier keeps one of his hard-worked horses there. The ostler, it may be, combines the duties of boots and general helper. Such ancient hostels not unfrequently have many of their chambers unfurnished, or converted into mere receptacles for useless lumber.

It is hardly fair to judge of what the old-time inns were like in the heyday of their prosperity by such depressing survivals. Their need, alas! is gone: what more can one expect? Their landlords too, how changed; the sadly diminished business is no

longer lucrative ; they are, as a rule, poor men who find it a hard task to make the old inn pay at all. Naturally they are wanting in the address, tact, and knowledge of the world and manners that so distinguished their worthy predecessors. A hostelry that has so descended from its former high estate doubtless inspired the following remarks from a recent anonymous writer : ' The normal English inn is not that delightful thing in hostelries which the poetical imagination loves to picture it as being. Feather beds of unutterable stuffiness, and a *cuisine* the most primitive in its characteristic and obvious imperfections, without possessing any of the supposed primitive virtues, are enough to make people who have once experienced them regret the experiment.' But though of necessity many of the more remote country inns (the reason of whose existence solely depended upon the requirements of road travellers) have, in their brave but hopeless struggle against the decrees of fate and changed circumstances, degenerated into little more than large roadside ' publics,' still others there are that have not only kept up their ancient usefulness and quiet dignity, but, as in the case of our excellent inn at Sudbury, have actually flourished and improved their accommodation. The pleasant glass covering to the courtyard here is a plain proof of this, forming as it does a charming resort on a wet day, and is just one of those things needful to perfect the arrangements and comfort of an English inn of the ancient type. The agreeable addition of a glass roofing to the old courtyards we found to be not unfrequent in the

eastern counties. Possibly this result is owing to the fact that railways were longer coming to this portion of England than generally elsewhere, and possibly also because the railway hotel has not so much, as in other parts of the country, taken the place of the old inn, which latter therefore still retains what custom there is. It may be accepted that, as a rule with few exceptions, the modern traveller by road will find excellent accommodation at the best hostleries in the country towns, and the rural wayside inns at the worst will always afford a simple repast of bread and cheese and fair ale ; but, as a matter of fact, only once on our journey were we reduced to this humble fare—humble, though not to be despised by the hungry wayfarer possessing a healthy appetite begotten of being out in the fresh, invigorating country air.

At the bar of our inn we met a burly farmer (of the genuine John Bull type, as personified in political cartoons) smoking his pipe and taking his ease, looking the very picture of prosperous contentment—for all the world as though wheat were many shillings a quarter dearer than it is, and the harvest prospects favourable instead of doubtful. ‘ Good morning, sir,’ he said cheerily as we came in ; ‘ fine weather for travelling.’ We returned the greeting, adding that we hoped the weather was equally good for farming purposes, with some passing remark as to the depressed state of agriculture. ‘ Well, times are not over-brilliant,’ he answered ; ‘ but I don’t complain. I manage to jog along comfortably enough.’ Here was a surprise for us ; we

had actually come upon a farmer who did not take the gloomy view of things. Perhaps, however, we thought, he is the happy owner of the land he cultivates, and having consequently no rent to pay, he sees things in a different light from the man who has to meet, or endeavour to meet, his landlord's demands every half-year; but, after all, it turned out that we were wrong in our supposition. Our farmer was only a tenant like the majority, and paid a fair rent for 'good useful land, but nothing wonderful.' From what we could gather in the course of our conversation, instead of struggling against the inevitable, he acknowledged the changed condition of affairs brought on by foreign competition, and no longer stuck abjectly to the old rotation of crops because they paid for the growing thus in the times of protection. From what we could make out, the secret of his comparative prosperity appeared to be in always, where possible, securing two profits upon his productions: he did not sell his raw material to others who take the lion's share of the profit; he converted his corn into pork, beef, and mutton; he did not sell his milk or cream, but converted them into cheese and butter; he made his fruit into jam, he ground his own corn, and secured for himself the miller's profit; so with careful management, doing away as far as possible with the middleman, our farmer managed, in spite of these latter evil days, to put a good face to the world, and to live comfortably, though fortune-making was out of the question. I doubt much, however, in spite of his enterprise, whether he could 'put anything by for a rainy day.'

One unexpected result of the agricultural depression—a result that may be a gain to some—is that sundry farmers, at their wit's end how to pay their rent, have discovered a new source of revenue by the letting of apartments with board, or even a portion of their farmhouse, to families when leaving town for their usual summer outing, and, having tried the experiment with profit, are repeating it. And a very welcome change from the usual run of seaside lodgings is the roomy and picturesque farmhouse, with the green fields for the children to romp and play in, the country around to explore, the farming operations to watch, the gathering of the crops, the outgoing and incoming of the teams, the milking of the cows, the feeding of the live stock, and perchance the haymaking to help with, not forgetting the plentiful supply of fresh-laid eggs, milk, and vegetables, all to be had at the market price, which differs very considerably from that of the fashionable watering-place shop. Moreover, one can never be dull at a farmhouse, as there is always something going on, always plenty doing to amuse children. I envy the youngster who spends his summer holiday in one, and, besides, there is far less chance in such enviable quarters of catching hooping-cough, scarlet fever, and the other complaints that children are heir to; *verb. sap.* Of course it would be advisable, even necessary indeed, to personally inspect a farmhouse before making arrangements for a definite stay thereat. Perhaps I may here state that I have myself with my family (much to our enjoyment and the health of the little ones) stayed at farmhouse

apartments, so I write having some experience in the matter. On one occasion our stay was for eight weeks, and on another for six, and friends of mine have also tried the same experiment, and the result in each case has been an unqualified success. At one farmhouse where I was, the tenant confessed to me that he found by letting apartments one year he received the full amount of his rent ; he owned that neither himself nor his wife liked the idea at all at first, but he had been fortunate in always having pleasant people, and now he rather enjoyed the change of having visitors—they interested him. Thus out of evil some good may come.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

Sudbury—The Head of Archbishop Simon—A Gruesome Sight—Quaint Tombstones—The Restorer again—An aged Clerk—Old-fashioned Farming—Spoiling Scenery—Iron Buildings—Past-time Customs—A Round Church—Halstead—An Old Warrior's Shield—Names of Places on Maps—A Charming Village—Thatched Cottages—A half-timbered Home.

WANDERING about the old-fashioned town of Sudbury we espied a photographer's shop and stepped therein in quest of local views. Looking over a quantity of prints our attention was arrested by one showing what appeared to be a decapitated head set up in a recess of a wall. Our curiosity was aroused by this weird and strange picture, and we asked for particulars about it. We were told that it was the head of Archbishop Simon of Sudbury, who was put to death by the rebels under Wat Tyler, and that it was preserved exactly as represented in the photograph in the vestry of St. Gregory's Church. We at once determined to see the ghastly relic, and the photographer kindly permitted his little girl to go with us to point out where the clerk lived, for, said he, 'it's not always easy for a stranger to discover the clerk'—the truth of which statement we fully endorsed from former experience in clerk-seeking. We gladly,

therefore, accepted the thoughtful offer, and the civil photographer's eight-year-old daughter was rewarded for her trouble with a shilling.

The clerk, a poor old man, was at home, and at once got the keys and hobbled with us to the church as fast as his crippled legs would allow. He told us that he was 'hard of hearing,' which was manifest, and further informed us that his father was born a hundred and two years ago. 'Yes, sir, my father, grandfather, and great-grandfather have all been sextons here'—of which fact he seemed very proud.

We were taken at once to the vestry, and, opening a little cupboard in the wall, there the clerk showed us the shrivelled head of the Archbishop—and a gruesome sight it was, with the ears and skin upon it dried up like parchment, looking even more ghastly than that of an Egyptian mummy. The head had been recently varnished by a local doctor, so we were informed, the better to preserve it. Below it, in puzzling old English letters, is the following inscription, which I have faithfully transcribed, omitting only one word difficult to decipher :—

The Head of Simon Theobald who was born at Sudbury . . .  
 R'thenn called Simon of Sudbury. He was sent when but a  
 Youth into fforeign Parts to Study the Civil Law. Whereof he  
 was made Doctor. He visited most of the Universities of ffrans.  
 was made Chaplain to Pope Innocent and Auditor Rota,  
 a Judge of the Roman Court. By interest of this Pope  
 he was made Chancellor of Salisbury. In the Year 1361 he  
 was consecrated Bishop of London, and in the Year 1375 was  
 translated to the See of Canterbury and made Chancellor of  
 England. while he was Bishop of London he Built the  
 upper part of St. Gregory's in Sudbury : and where his  
 ffather's House Stood he erected a College of Secular Priests  
 and endowed it with the Yearly Revenue of one Hundred

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Twenty-two Pounds eighteen shillings, and was at length barbarously Beheaded upon Tower Hill in London by the Rabble in Wat Tyler's Rebellion in the Reign of Richard 2d 1382.

The body of the unfortunate Archbishop lies beneath an altar-tomb in Canterbury Cathedral. It seemed to us a pity that his head is not allowed to rest in peace there also, instead of being made a sort of vulgar peepshow of, to gratify idle curiosity. The day for relics has gone by.

St. Gregory's Church, which stands upon the site of an earlier Saxon one of wood, possesses many ancient and curious tomb-slabs. The clerk, who, in spite of his age and infirmities, manifestly took a great interest and pride in the church, pointed out some of these to us, one half hidden under matting, and another wholly hidden under the organ. He told us that several of the memorial slabs had been removed from the chancel when it was restored, in order, we presumed, to make room for the trumpery modern tiles that now have place there. Probably it was then that the old roof was painted a crude blue, and adorned (save the mark!) with gilt stars.

Perhaps the finest of these memorials to the long-departed dead is one consisting of a large grey stone slab, with a deep recess, evidently in times past containing a brass. This stone has been much worn by the overflow of water from the piscina—such, at least, the clerk told us, was the opinion of certain antiquaries who had inspected it. Then we were shown another slab, the matrix upon which exhibits a mitre in outline; this, therefore, we judged, had contained

an exceedingly fine brass to a bishop, but who the bishop was there is nothing now left to show. Then we had pointed out to us what we were told was a very curious and beautifully engraved slab ; but this being more or less hidden by the deal flooring of the organ, we were unable to judge of its merits ; the clerk, however, said, ' That be to the father and mother of the man whose head I showed you in the vestry.' What authority he had for this statement I know not.

Then we were taken to the outside of the church and shown still another ancient stone slab, with the matrix of a very fine brass thereon, which matrix indicates that the brass was of a man and a woman. This interesting stone was removed from the chancel and turned out into the churchyard at the time of the restorations, and is now fast being worn smooth by the frequent tread of worshippers. ' You see, sir,' remarked the clerk philosophically, ' it baint much use being a great somebody after you're dead.'

In the churchyard here is a tombstone, bearing the date of 1706, to a certain Thomas Carter : ' A Sudbury camel that passed through the eye of a needle.'

From Sudbury we made our way to Halstead, our road leading us through a very pretty country. No observant person can travel through rural England without perceiving that important changes are gradually but surely taking place therein. Of old the country community was roughly divided into three main classes : the landlord, the tenant farmer,

and the labourer. In the ancient homes we have the stately mansion (taking the place of the lordly feudal castle), the pleasant and picturesque farmstead, and the humble cottage. Now everywhere throughout the land a fresh class is making itself apparent. Not a large land-owning one this, but a well-to-do middle-class that desires a medium-sized but luxurious home with a few acres around. These new homes of the people meet the traveller's view on every hand. Almost any village that can boast of healthy and picturesque surroundings has one of these fresh comers in its vicinity. Then, too, the large farms, for want of tenants, are being converted into smaller holdings ; such holdings necessitate new buildings, which are raised upon the most economical principles, the outcome of all this change being that the recent structures are plain, uninteresting, and mean-looking, in marked contrast with the old-time farmstead with its wealth of spacious barns, granaries, stabling, and the like, so suggestive of contented, abiding, and ample prosperity.

Even that pleasantly familiar and characteristic feature of the English landscape, the tangled hedge-row, is in a measure threatened ; modern scientific farming (that delights in silos, steam-threshers, and machinery) has found it more profitable to keep this closely shorn and unpicturesquely prim, than to let it grow in its own charming, wild, wayward fashion : and now, but too frequently, when fresh fencing is required, wire and posts are employed as being more economical than the old-fashioned thorn, and not taking anything out of the ground.

What, I wonder, would England be without its green hedges? They are such every-day features in the country that we hardly realise how much they have to do with its beauty; but anyone who has travelled in a hedgeless land, such as America, must, on his return home, if he observes things at all, have perceived what a wonderful charm the too little appreciated hedges lend to the landscape.

But of all the modern contrivances for spoiling rural beauty (one that unfortunately asserts its hideous existence far and near), surely nothing can approach the cheap, ready-made, corrugated iron structures; they are the perfection of ugliness, but they are economical; and in this competitive money-seeking age, what is beauty in the balance with gold? An iron church made in Birmingham, purchased to seat so many persons at so much a head, set up in the midst of the pleasant green country, is as great an eyesore as can be conceived, the worst enemy to rural beauty I wot of, and I would pray in a barn rather than worship in such a fane. Little wonder indeed that Mr. Ruskin became wrathful and indignant when asked to subscribe towards an iron church, and this is how he replied to the request: 'I am scornfully amused at your appeal to me, of all people in the world the precisely least likely to give you a farthing. . . . Can't you preach and pray behind hedges—or in a sandpit—or a coal-hole—first? And of all manner of churches idiotically built, iron churches are the damnablest to me.'

Fortunately, in the country, churches of corrugated iron (set up, be it marked, not built) are rare;

but now and again they are to be found ruining the fair prospect. Fancy setting up such a fane *ad majorem Dei gloriam*! But though churches of this kind do not happily at the present abound, other sorts of iron structures are, alas! but too frequently to be met with in rural England. These are used for all kinds of purposes, for village schools, small roadside stations, outbuildings on farms, shelters for haystacks, workshops, tool and boat houses, and the like.

The other day I took a drive to sketch a charming sixteenth-century farmstead (an old friend of mine), an ancient house of many gables, great stacks of chimneys, and quaint windows of leaded lattice panes—a picture rather than a house built for man's convenience. That dear old farmstead, with its time-tinted walls and lichen-laden roof, have I not sketched it from almost every point of view? Fancy, then, my feelings, upon arriving at my old painting ground, to find that some agent from Birmingham had persuaded the farmer to purchase and erect one of these detestable iron structures, spoiling the restful look and picturesqueness of the place. Unfortunately it happened the farmer had pressing need of an outbuilding, for most of the old ones had fallen into useless decay, and the necessity of hard times had compelled him to obtain a shelter for his wagons as cheaply as he could. Necessity is a bad taskmaster.

Even in the minor matter of dress a considerable and regrettable change for the worse (picturesquely considered) has taken place in the country during the last quarter of a century. The once familiar

smock-frock (generally white or cream-coloured, but sometimes of other tints), always with much pains and to the pride of the wearer embroidered down the front and back, is no longer to be seen, save in the most remote districts. On a Sunday, instead of the characteristically clean smock-frock (smart-frock I have heard it termed in times past), an ill-fitting rusty black or grey coat is worn, with no character about it. The farmer's wife, too, now studies the latest Paris fashions in the cheap illustrated papers or magazines, and she endeavours to follow them as far as possible consistently with her means. Provincialisms are no more; one monotonous level of uniformity prevails: local peculiarities in dress, such as red cloaks, the way of wearing shawls, pattens for wet weather, the curious hats for women, that used to prevail in parts of Wales, are no longer to be found. London fashions at second hand follow the traveller everywhere, greatly to the loss of the lover of the picturesque, and sadly to the trouble of the artist who wishes to introduce rural figures into his country scenes.

We made a short *détour* from our stage that day to visit the curious round church at Little Maplestead. This peculiar structure of flint, with stone facings, has been so much altered and restored as almost to have ceased to be an ancient building, having little old about it but its history. This is the smallest and latest of the four early round churches that still exist in England, and owes its origin to the knights hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem. The other three are the Temple in



London, formerly the head-quarters of the Knights Templars, the church of St. Sepulchre at Cambridge, and another of the same title at Northampton. There is still another circular church in England, St. Peter's at Cheltenham, but this is modern, and therefore more curious than interesting. The church at Little Maplestead is only thirty feet in diameter ; it possesses a curious Norman font of rude workmanship, which is now, thanks to the restoration and rebuilding, of more interest to ecclesiologists and antiquaries than the church itself. Then, passing through a picturesquely wooded country, we arrived at Halstead and obtained very comfortable quarters at the George.

Halstead we found to be a pleasant and prosperous little town, agreeably situated on the Colne, an old-fashioned place with some ancient buildings, one of which especially interested us, a quaint and very old inn, with carved gables, called 'Ye White Hart.' But, like all old towns, Halstead is every year gradually getting newer and less picturesque. Here in the evening a detachment of the Salvation Army held a noisy gathering right in front of our hotel, with banners and with drum, which gathering effectually prevented our reading or talking by the noise it made. It does seem rather hard, even in a free country, that one cannot be sure of taking one's quiet in one's inn. I have till lately lived under the mistaken impression that it was one of the inherent privileges of being an Englishman that he could enjoy himself, without let or hindrance, so long as he did not transgress against the law of the land

and did nothing to injure or annoy his neighbour. The doings of the Salvation Army, under the protection of the police and to the delight of the rabble, have effectually removed this wrong impression. A German band playing lustily out of tune, or even an organ-grinder, is disturbing enough performing opposite your house ; but these you have the right to order away. The detachments of the Salvation Army are infinitely more distracting ; but under the cloak of religion the law allows them to do as they will—and the sooner the law is altered in the interests of peaceful citizens who pay heavy rates and taxes for small return, the better. What sort of a religion can that be that annoys others ? If people cannot be good without bands, banners, and shouting, their goodness is little worth.

We could not stand the Salvation Army ; the groups that gather around its local captains have not even the merit of being picturesque ; we acknowledged ourselves conquered, and beat a hasty retreat. We wended our way to the church, for we had yet some two hours of daylight left, and there we felt sure of being in peace. Some people have expressed themselves perplexed at the popularity of the Salvation Army amongst a certain class ; to me there is nothing perplexing about the matter. The poorer inhabitants of our country towns lead very uninteresting, uneventful lives ; their homes are not attractive ; they find the streets in fine weather more agreeable than their uncomfortable, overcrowded homes—and little wonder. Well, these people like to be amused, and a little mild excitement comes as

a pleasant break in their monotonous existence. The Salvation Army supplies this excitement free of cost, and there is the secret of the whole matter. Such, at least, is our opinion, given for what it may be worth, but arrived at after a careful study of the matter.

It was a relief to escape from this latest religious (?) craze and get inside the hallowed walls of the venerable church; the solemn silence they enclosed filled us with a soothing sense of peace. In this ancient church we came upon some very interesting but much-defaced monuments. One was of a knight with crossed legs, showing (according to the generally accepted opinion of antiquaries) that the gallant warrior had been to the Holy Land with the Crusaders, though a learned minority deny that this crossing of legs in effigies has anything to do with the expedition. I am inclined to the former opinion, but rather possibly from prejudice of early belief in the tradition than anything else. I have heard hard-headed antiquaries argue about this matter, but without result further than a loss of temper—certainly without convincing me one way or the other.

Another fine altar-tomb had upon it two recumbent figures, representing a man in full armour with his wife by his side. Though much defaced and without any inscription now, as far as we could discover, this dilapidated tomb interested us exceedingly, for in the recess above it hung the very shield of the worthy warrior, dented and showing the bruises of war, but still bearing faded traces of the original colours and gilding of his coat of arms. When they have not been stolen (or removed, if that is a

pleasanter term), the portions of armour, helmets, breast-plates, swords, shields, and spurs of the brave knights of old, that erst were frequently placed over their tombs, are of the greatest interest and add vastly to the picturesque and romantic effect of such monuments. Unfortunately, such comparatively portable articles, when they escaped the Puritan despoiler, which, to be just, they mostly did, being neither crosses nor yet superstitious images, but too often became the prey of sacrilegious thieves, who, even to this day to my certain knowledge, have entered country churches and removed from them their ancient brasses, all for the paltry gain they may obtain from collectors; and I even think that collectors who purchase such things are equally guilty with the thieves. Not long ago I was offered, in a certain curiosity shop, a beautifully engraved mediæval brass, the inscription being carefully removed all but the date.

Glancing back as we left the sacred fane, we beheld a picture that will long be remembered by us. The low evening sunlight, streaming in through the stained windows, touched with a mosaic of many hues the ancient tombs, glorifying their solemn gloom by transferring to them the chequered tints of the 'twilight saints and dim emblazonings' from the mellow-tinted glass.

The churchyard here has long been disused for burials, Halstead having years ago wisely provided itself with a cemetery outside the town. Instead, therefore, of the usual sad colony of decaying and neglected tombstones and grass-grown mounds, we

found the God's acre laid out and planted as a garden. The effect was pleasing, though there is no need for allowing the hallowed soil to be converted into a pleasure-ground for local gossips, still less into a noisy playground for children. We noticed here, instead of the usual mournful and depressing yew whose roots 'wrap about the bones' and whose 'fibres net the dreamless head,' that a variety of trees had been planted ; amongst others we observed the copper beech, the holly, the hawthorn, the ash, and sundry kinds of evergreens. This providing of cemeteries, and making pleasant to look upon the usually dismal and dreary churchyards, is greatly to be commended ; the only danger is, as I have said, lest the church gardens should become the rendezvous for village gossips, or a ready playground for children.

Upon leaving our inn next morning the landlord's little daughter presented me with a beautiful rose that she said she had just gathered out of her very own garden ; though rather large for the purpose, I at once gallantly placed it in the button-hole of my coat. Such kindly meant attentions to strangers—of which during our journey we received many—are very pleasing, even though coming from a child. Greatly did I prize that rose, though, I regret to say, somehow I lost it on the way.

Our road was hilly at the start ; from the top of the first rise we had a very pretty view, looking back, of Halstead, with the green valley in which it lies, brightened by the winding silvery Colne ; the pleasantly wooded country beyond forming a charming

setting to the scene. Near to the spot where we pulled up to admire the view, we noticed an old oak tree, old but not particularly fine ; this was carefully bound round with iron to preserve it. Whether the tree had any history I cannot say, for at the time there was nobody in sight of whom to make inquiry.

Our road now led us through shady woods, and for a space the hedges on either side of us were of yellow broom, the glowing colour of which made our way quite cheerful, telling as it did brightly against the green foliage of the trees. Then the woods gave place to a more open country of pastures and tilled fields, and, descending a hill, we crossed a stream by a picturesque wooden bridge. Shortly after crossing this we came to High Garret—so, at least, we gathered from our map. The reading of the name of a place correctly on maps, as at present printed, is not such a simple matter as it should be. The names of towns and villages (especially if they be long) occupy considerable space, and it is by no means always easy to know whether the place is intended to be shown at the end or the beginning of the word. Map makers engrave the titles where most convenient, so as to avoid confusion and overcrowding of their maps in certain spots ; this avoiding of confusion in one point, however, begets considerable uncertainty in another, for a name on a map often occupies three miles or more ; and where there are many villages shown on it at about that distance from one another, it wants some care to avoid a mistake.

High Garret, as I have said, in spite of its un-

picturesque name, is a most charming village, with thatched cottages that are so delightful in pictures and reality. One of these cottage homes had its lowly walls completely covered with a combination of roses, honeysuckle, vines, and ivy. Here also we observed a very picturesque modern residence, built in the good old-fashioned, half-timbered style that suits so well the homelike English landscape. A convenient and a comfortable style this for the country, as well as a picturesque one ; the projecting upper stories (that so especially belong to it) are not merely quaint and ornamental features, but serve a very practical purpose—the throwing forward of the first floor over the lower one, affording more space for bed-chambers, which in small houses of the straight wall type are generally in short supply in proportion to the sitting-rooms, unless, indeed, the building be carried up another story, entailing the perpetual mounting of extra stairs and loss of external proportion in the house.

I am the lucky possessor of a charming little cottage in this pleasant style, and, owing to the projecting story on either side, two additional cosy bed-rooms are secured, and plenty of cupboard space besides ; thus convenience and picturesqueness are most happily combined. Those who have seen over this little homelike cottage, with its high-pitched gables, large stacks of chimneys, and mullioned small-paned windows, are always much surprised at the amount of accommodation in the upper part of it.

It is a pity that this thoroughly English and

comfortable style of architecture is not more adopted in the country dwellings of to-day ; and it may be combined, if wished, with the old-fashioned weather tiling, which has the advantage of keeping the walls of a house dry even in the wettest climate, besides securing cool rooms in summer and warm ones in winter.



## CHAPTER XIX.

Rural Inns—A Clever Conceit in Words—An Old Water-mill—A Picture though a Photograph—Braintree—A Homelike Land—The Pleasures of the Road—A Day's Drive across Country—Great and Little Leigh—A Village 'Store'—A Unique Wooden Effigy—An Old Tudor Gateway—Old Mansions and Modern Farmsteads.

SHORTLY after leaving High Garret we came upon a picturesque public by the wayside, ycleped 'Ye Hare and Hounds,' possibly of more importance in the old coaching days than now. The little hostel looked very neat and clean, though how it obtained sufficient custom to exist, much less prosper, was a puzzle to us. Sometimes, however, the tenants of these rural inns combine a little farming with their other business, and so manage to prosper in a quiet way.

I have from time to time, as we journeyed along, remarked upon any peculiar names, curious inn signs, or quaint epitaphs that struck us. I have, however, forgotten to make mention of an inn sign, which from its clever double meaning I think worth a place here. There is a certain wayside hostelry, or rather perhaps I should say a cross between a hostelry and a public, that bears the title of the 'Dewdrop Inn.' We did not at first perceive the play upon words, till it was explained to us: Dew-

drop Inn—Do drop in: not a bad conceit for a house of entertainment that lives by its patrons dropping in!

On now we drove through a green stretch of restful country, with nothing on the way to arrest our particular attention till we arrived at the bottom of a long descent, where we pulled up by the side of an old water-mill. The ancient mill, added to and altered from time to time, with all its picturesque irregularity; the green weedy stream, with the bridge across it; the clear pool below the mill, that doubled the building in its stilly water, together with the trees around, made a charming picture—so charming as to induce us to unpack the camera and take it. The picture was an instantaneous one, and, after exposing a plate, we duly returned it to our changing-box. Upon developing this plate some weeks afterwards at home, we made the unexpected discovery that we had included in our picture more than we were aware of at the time; some ducks were on the water, having just been chased off the land by a dog; but also, what both pleased and surprised us much more, we had secured a carrier's cart coming along, and an anxious mother just in the very act of snatching up her little one, who had evidently been playing on the road, out of harm's way. Such natural incidents, that now and then (though I must confess by very rare happy chance) reward the photographer, convert a mere mechanical photograph into a real picture.

Arriving at Braintree (a rambling country town, with irregular winding streets that boast of some interesting old houses) we drove up to the White

**Hart inn.** An ancient coaching house this, possessing an ample courtyard, doubtless the scene of much life and bustle in times past, and not wholly deserted even to-day. How pleasant it is, this driving into your inn, and descending beneath the shelter of its arched entrance, in quiet, all at your leisure and out of the bustle and noise of the street!

We found excellent quarters at the White Hart, and had there an old-fashioned meal in an old-fashioned room, than which nothing could have pleased us better. The landlord, who had observed our arrival and who came out to greet the coming guest, was a pattern of civility. Seeing that we took an interest in his ancient hostelry, he kindly showed us all over it. The railways, he told us, had not managed altogether to ruin his posting trade, for he did 'a deal of posting' even now; sometimes his yard was nearly full of conveyances, and 'at a pinch' he had managed to put up a hundred horses. It is strange how generally the inns of the eastern counties seem to have retained much of their old posting business, that as a rule elsewhere in England has vanished as completely as the mail coach. It would be interesting to learn the why and wherefore of this survival.

Though no single one possesses specially noteworthy features, here and there in Braintree may be found old gabled and timbered houses that lend an interest to the place. One that we sketched had three gables facing the roadway, the middle being the highest of the three. On the front of this ancient building were the remains of rich ornamental plaster-

work. How pleasantly picturesque is the old fashion of making the gable ends and dormers of houses to face the street, thus delightfully breaking the wearisome monotony of level sky-lines that prevails in most modern cities ! How markedly these charming old houses contrast with the newer ones by their side that have still their history to make ! Not only do they vary from each other, but seldom in any single house are even two of the windows of the same size and shape. Nowadays architects seem to concern themselves more about great public edifices than the less showy though quite as necessary designing of homes for the people. These are left to Buggins the builder, who runs up rows of houses all of one pattern, uniformly uninteresting, having none of the variety of detail that is so noticeable and pleasingly effective in the old houses. But I must not be too hard on Buggins ; there is a demand for cheap showy houses, and he simply supplies the required article ; it is rather the fault of the times than of the man. Let us be just : possibly Buggins would prefer to build beautiful houses to ugly ones, if only he felt sure that they would pay him as well. And all this raising of ugly buildings to let or sell is the result of the demand of a busy and impatient world, that will not trouble or does not care to build homes for itself.

In the course of our wanderings about Braintree, we found our way to the church. The doors of this were carefully locked ; however, we managed to get a glimpse at the interior through a keyhole, and, as it appeared restored and uninteresting, we concluded

that it was not worth while to go a-hunting for the clerk. What a pity it is that our country churches cannot be left always open, like those on the Continent! Truly many are, but the great majority are kept religiously closed throughout the week, and only opened for service on Sundays. Generally we have found, curiously enough, that the better cared for the church, the more likely were the doors to be open. As a telling example, the doors of the sadly neglected church at Sall were all locked, whilst those of the really beautiful and unique church of Little Braxted were open.

Our road out of Braintree took us through a pleasant homelike country, a country of green fields bordered by tangled hedgerows, with clumps of wood here and there, and now and again the peep of a distant church tower. Snug red-roofed farmsteads, set in the midst of bird-haunted barns, and surrounded by pleasant paddocks and orchards, met our gaze from time to time as we drove along—a picture every one. Somehow to me the English landscape never seems quite complete without at least a glimpse of one of these picturesque farmsteads; they are so typical of old-time England, and are not to be found in any other country, search we the whole world over.

What an enjoyable thing it is, this driving across country, with all its changing incidents and the inexhaustible interest that the ever-varying landscape affords! It is the very ideal of pleasure travel. How delightful it is to get away from the hackneyed paths of the ordinary tourist (who goes where his guide-

book directs)—to escape the well-known show places that are almost as familiar to us from description, engravings, and photographs, as our own home—to get into a fresh country where the poetry of civilisation has not been sacrificed to the necessities of modern progress, with all its doubtful advantages and all its certain ugliness! It has been truly said that ‘the Englishman is curiously hide-bound in his traditions of travel. Either he goes up the Rhine, does Switzerland, and stops at Meurice’s; or he valiantly trundles his bicycle round the world, navigates Jordan in a canoe, and takes his life in his hand to the summit of Chimborazo. But the untrodden fields of settled, populous, unheroic lands have no temptation for him.’ Unfortunately for English scenery, it is not a long way off; it possesses neither the rare virtue of distance nor of difficulty in getting at it; it entails neither the Channel passage, nor an ocean voyage, nor yet a wearisome railway journey, alas!

A day’s drive through some portion of untravelled England is truly a succession of pictures, a revelation of scenic loveliness. You leave your hostel, say, early in the morning; a fresh stage is before you, full of untasted pleasures; the word is given, the traces tighten, and you find yourself driving from under the archway of your inn and along the old-fashioned street of the little country town where we will presume that you have passed the night. Leaving the place, you get at once into the real country, for the town is a finished one, delightfully unprogressive; therefore there are no long-drawn-out, mean outskirts to traverse. Genuine green fields and farms are reached

as soon as you drive away from the compact little place; your journey becomes beautiful and interesting at the outset.

At first you pass, let us presume, through a purely agricultural land (I am now giving a typical example of a day's drive across country). Then, all unexpectedly, for you know nothing of what is before you, the hedge-bordered road widens out into a wild windswept heath, with an extended uninterrupted prospect on either hand. Here and there are some dark clumps of Scotch firs, that give quite a character to the untamed landscape. A famous place this heath in the olden days for the highwayman, and lonely travellers in times past were relieved when they had safely traversed it without making the undesirable acquaintance of the bold knights of the road. Now there is no fear of meeting a worse personage than a stray tramp, or possibly some gipsies encamping out. Both may beg alms of you, but they will not demand them or your life.

Then the heath is gradually left behind, and a restful pastoral country takes its place. After a time the road again widens out into a gorse-besprinkled common, given over to children and geese, with perhaps the addition of a stray donkey grazing upon the rough herbage. Some old thatched cottages are scattered here and there by the side of the waste ground—picturesque cottages, but not too picturesque or over-neat (as one sometimes sees in pictures) to be real. Near to the cottages will be probably some linen hanging out to dry, fluttering in the fresh wind. A pool of reed-grown water with a bent and aged

willow completes the scene ; in this the youthful Waltons practise their 'prentice hand with a stick for a rod, a bit of string for a line, and a bent pin for a hook. The children will look up at the strange carriage as it passes along, and will wave their caps and cheer just as their forefathers did, in the days of their youth, when the coach rattled by.

At the end of the common are four cross roads (where they used to bury suicides) ; here stands the remains of a useless sign-post, the arms having long ago vanished, and now the post leans as though soon it too would disappear. Near to the post is an old weather-beaten milestone, half hidden by nettles and weeds ; on this nothing can be deciphered but an ' I X.'—doubtless referring to the distance in miles from one town to another.

Leaving the common the road takes a sudden turn, and before you, close to the wayside, stands a solitary windmill, set on a height darkly silhouetted against the bright summer sky, its sails slowly revolving round and round, the very poetry of motion. Close by is the neat whitewashed home of the miller ; no creepers climb over it, nor are there many flowers in the tiny garden, for on the exposed height the bleak winds blow unrestrained, so that even a hardy stunted thorn has a severe struggle for existence.

Then, as you journey on, the road descends with shady elms on either hand. Upon one side is a pleasant margin of grass, the very spot for a canter, but you have the way all to yourself. Then a bend in the road suddenly reveals an old decayed coaching



inn, with its rambling, half-deserted stabling, and its grass-grown approach, where formerly not a sign of green was to be seen. An ancient half-timbered structure this, bearing the date of 1668. Notice, as you pass, the large bay windows below and the leaden lattice ones above. By all means, if you will, pull up awhile, and order a glass of ale as an excuse to get a peep inside. You enter; nobody seems about; there are some flowers in the cosy, cool little bar; the floor is sanded, but none the worse for that. Presently the landlord makes his appearance with many apologies; he draws you the ale and does not seem indisposed for a chat, for his must be a lonely life. 'Yes,' he tells you in answer to your queries, 'this were a famous house in the old coaching days; the mails used to change here; seventy or more horses were always kept at the stables then. The farmers around drop in of an evening for their pipe and glass, and they are our best customers.' You take a glance at the 'coffee room' as you leave; it is long and low, with a beam across the ceiling; on the walls are some highly coloured prints of the pre-chromographic age, representing coaching and hunting scenes with impossible horses. The furniture of the room is solid and old-fashioned—undoubtedly the very same that belonged to the inn before railways had ruined road travel.

The sunshine streams in through the ample bay window upon the faded carpet, hangings, and paper, giving, in spite of the general faded look, a cheerful aspect to the little-used chamber. But time will not permit of longer loitering here, and there is no need, for, after all, this is not an ideal hostelry; still, at a

pinch, the weather-overtaken or belated traveller might do worse than rest awhile thereat.

As, however, the day is fortunately young and fine, you will be disposed probably to continue on your way on the chance of coming to a halting-place more to your liking. The old inn is chiefly interesting now as a specimen of bygone rural architecture, and as an example of departed prosperity that appeals to you more on account of its past associations than its present desirability as a house of entertainment for the strange wayfarer. The exterior of the ancient hostelry is, however, quaintly picturesque, time-toned and beautified as it is by age. The big sign still is supported by a mass of wrought-iron scroll-work, raised there in the heyday of the coaching period. Such signs are as much out of fashion now as are the titles thereon. It still remains, however, careless of the world's changes, still swings in the wind as it has done for years long gone by. The design upon it is so bleached by sun and rain that you can hardly make out whether it is intended for the familiar fierce Red Lion, or the equally familiar mild White Hart.

Pleasant farmsteads, with their weather-beaten outbuildings, now meet your view as you journey on, and presently you pass by a well-timbered park, catching a glance of the gleam of silvery water through the fine great branching trees ; but the house cannot be seen from the road. The lodge gates are, however, attractively pretty, with their thatched roofs and rough walls covered with green and flowering creepers. Now, after passing through a restful

pastoral country, pleasanter than any picture to look upon, you come to a little village, asleep in the soft summer sunshine ; very charming does this appear with its ivy-grown church tower and cosy rectory close at hand ; an enviable peaceful home seems that snug garden-surrounded rectory.

The village looks neat and clean, and you wonder who lives in the one or two old large red-brick houses there that stand well back from the street behind high moss-grown walls. As you drive along you pass by a primitive 'public,' but can see no inn ; just, however, as the village street ends, you perceive, some short way ahead, a sign-board projecting on a post with a great green dragon depicted thereon. This sign rejoices in a fresh coat of paint to give the traveller heraldic welcome. Then, almost immediately after, the high-pitched gables of the hostelry itself come into view. From experience of road travel, a glance satisfies you that this hostelry will suit. It is a long, low, two-storied building, with quaint dormer windows in its great roof ; an arched approach in the centre leads to the courtyard beyond. You drive in confidently, and throw down the reins to the waiting ostler, who, having heard the well-known sound of horses' feet, is standing prepared to receive you.

The courtyard is a picture with its irregular rambling outbuildings. The stables prove to be good, the corn sound, the hay sweet. You are fortunate to have put up at an inn that is much frequented by hunting men in the season. Hunting men and fishermen—long life to them!—support many a

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charming wayside hostelry that otherwise might have disappeared altogether, or at least have lost much of its ancient cosiness and comfort. 'The horses will be well done to,' the ostler remarks, touching his forelock, being without any head covering. Feeling satisfied on this point, you enter your inn. A stout, motherly-looking landlady receives you here, not a landlord; and I have never yet known an inn to fail its promise when the landlady pleases. You are hungry with your morning drive in the bracing air, and ask if you can have some lunch, or dinner, if you prefer dining in the middle of the day. 'Certainly, sir!' is the reply. 'We can get you a nice little dinner if you care to wait, or you can have some cold beef or lamb at once.' You are shown into a charming old-fashioned, low-ceilinged room that has an inviting look: there are flowers in the window, and on the table a London paper three days old, and a county one one day older, with sundry odd copies of the 'Illustrated London News,' the 'Graphic,' and a stray number or two of 'Punch.' Presently a neat maid comes in to prepare for your meal; and if with a good appetite you do not do it, and the cool, clear, sparkling ale, ample justice, it is not the fault of the viands or the home-brewed beer.

After your repast, whilst the horses are resting, you light your pipe and proceed to take a ramble round the place, and most likely you are attracted first to the ancient church. On your way you stop at the blacksmith's shop, the only busy place in the village, and ask where the clerk lives. You are told that he is away for the day in the country; so you

proceed boldly to the snug rectory to ask there for the keys. Whilst you are making the request the grey-haired rector himself comes out. Perhaps he does not quite like entrusting the keys to a perfect stranger, so volunteers to go himself with you to the church. Arriving there, he points out a curious altar-tomb, with the recumbent figure of a cross-legged Crusader, and tells something of the long-departed warrior's history that he has unearthed from certain valued but ponderous tomes at home. Then he calls attention to a quaintly figured and inscribed brass on the chancel floor. This, he says, has been inspected by a number of antiquaries, some of whom say that it is intended to represent . . . and here follows a long argument as to the exact meaning of the archaic wording of the brass and the unusual engraving of the figure. Finding that you take an interest in these things, the rector begins to take an interest in you ; he has much studied information to impart, and manifestly rejoices to impart it, and is delighted to find a willing listener. By this time you will have discovered that the rector is an enthusiastic antiquary. He then shows you some faint traces of former frescoes that had been whitewashed over, either by the Puritans or by others, in order to preserve them from destroying hands. Then he shows you all over the little church, pointing to a bit of ancient tracery here and there, to the remains of a Norman arch built up, revealing by these the changes and chances of the sacred structure's long life's history.

As you take your leave of the rector, upon thank-

ing him for his courtesy, he tells you of a very interesting old house only half a mile away by a footpath. This house, he hints, is well worth seeing, if you can spare the time ; it was once, you learn, a moated grange, but now is a farmhouse. Thanking your informant, you proceed by the pleasant footpath as directed, and soon come to the old place—and a charming bit of building it is—a poem in bricks and mortar, with its lichen-laden roof, its Tudor chimneys, mullioned windows ; surrounded, this delightfully picturesque abode, by an old garden with prim but untidy walks and yew-bordered lawn. This garden is enclosed by a weed-grown moat, which now is crossed by a moss-encrusted stone bridge, only wide enough for a foot-passenger. By the side of the bridge is a great pigeon-house, larger than many a labourer's cottage, and better built than many a modern mansion.

Crossing the moat, a short straight gravel walk brings you to the front door—an elaborate bit of carved work, with the shield, crest, and motto of the former knightly owner cut in bold relief over it, much weather-worn and half hidden by creeping ivy, this heraldic device. On inquiry you are told that the occupier of the old home 'does not allow people to go over the place, but you are very welcome to wander where you will outside.' You feel disappointed at not being able to see the interior, but you cannot resent the polite refusal ; for has not every man a right to enjoy his home in peace without having his quiet enjoyment disturbed by strangers ? and you duly appreciate the good-natured permission

so readily granted to roam over the old garden and sketch the romantic exterior of the ancient house. As you stroll about, however, you do manage to get a glimpse through an open window of an oak-panelled chamber, with a genuine old-fashioned ingle-nook (a little room in itself). This ingle-nook is lined with quaint blue Dutch tiles, and on the hearth you can just perceive some curious iron fire-dogs, on which rest mighty logs of oak. What a charming corner on a cold winter's night! The mantel above is of dark oak,

Carved with figures strange and sweet,  
All made out of the carver's brain.

All this you take in at a rapid glance, and, were it not for its low situation and the suggestion of rats and dampness, owing to the close proximity of the moat, you feel that you would much like to change homes with the farmer. Such a picturesque old moated house no other country but England could show.

But the hours are slipping by, and only half of your pleasant day's pilgrimage is done; you feel that it is time to be getting back to your inn, or you may be belated on the road; so you retrace your steps to the Green Dragon, though on your way you feel half a mind to spend the night there, and further inspect at your leisure the rambling village and its quaint old-world surroundings; but, after due consideration, decide to proceed, reasoning truly enough that, were you to stop the day over at every charming spot you come to, you would hardly get home

before the winter. On reaching your inn, therefore, you order the horses to be put to, and, after a most delightful summer afternoon's drive, you find yourself eventually taking your ease at another comfortable and old-fashioned hostelry facing the wide market-place of the little country town wherein it is situated. During the evening you find your way to the secluded bowling-green in the rear of your inn ; here you smoke a contemplative pipe, feeling much at peace with all the world, and watch with more or less interest a well-contested game at bowls that is being played there. This ended, you seek the cosy bar, and have a chat with the landlord over another and final pipe, and a hot steaming glass of whisky and water (ordered 'for the good of the house'). Thus end your day's wanderings.

Now, after this over-long digression, it is high time to return to ourselves. The first village that we came to after leaving Braintree was Little Leigh—a small and not particularly interesting hamlet. Here on a tiny cottage we observed the inscription, 'Great Leigh Supply Stores,' for there are two villages near together, Great Leigh and Little Leigh, the former being a mile or so away from the highway. We were much amused at this remote village shop calling itself by the grand title of Stores. Why this departure from the good old English term of shop? As reasonably call a retired tradesman's suburban semi-detached villa a stately mansion, or a limited London square a park—perhaps more so!

The small church of Little Leigh is interesting on account of a fourteenth-century recumbent effigy



of a priest it possesses ; this is of wood and of life-size, and is said to be the only wooden effigy of a priest known.

We noticed on our map ' Leigh Priory,' marked as being at a short distance from the village. Of the grand mansion that was built on the site of the ancient priory, now only a red-brick Tudor gateway remains—a ruinous but picturesque structure, with facings of stone, having embattled corner turrets and some fine ornamental chimneys. It is surprising how many such ancient gateways that formerly belonged to stately mansions still exist in this eastern portion of England ; the mansions themselves having disappeared, or been converted into simple farmsteads—and delightfully romantic nineteenth-century farmhouses they make, these olden homes of bygone lord and erst-proud knight.

## CHAPTER XX.

Scenic Surprises—An Inviting Road—A Ruined Windmill—Rooks—  
Little Waltham—Broomfield—An Old Friend—Rain *versus* Dust  
—Writtle—Picturesque Essex—Curious Mist Effect—Nearly an  
Accident—Chipping Ongar—An Old Saxon Wooden Church—A  
Pleasant Footpath—Names of Places—An Edifying Conversation  
—Clerk-hunting.

AFTER leaving the hamlet of Leigh we drove through a very pretty country. Our road that day abounded in scenic surprises; we passed, as we journeyed on, many an old time-toned home, each one seeming, were it possible, more picturesque than the last. The landscape bore a mellow, humanised aspect; the works of man were manifest on every hand; from the tall spire of the distant church, to the furrowed field by the side of the way, these human associations gave an added interest to the ever-varying prospect. A livable, lovable land it seemed to us—a land of ancient peace that had never been disturbed by the railway whistle, that had not had its century-gathered beauty spoilt by the triumphs of commercial enterprise, that knew nothing of the fevered hurry and rush of the outer money-making world—a bit of real old England, looking much now even as it did in those long-vanished days when our easy-going, port-wine-loving ancestors passed through it by coach. Each bend in the road re-

vealed some new beauty, always delightfully surprising us by presenting what we least expected. A sort of vague sensation took possession of us, as though we were travellers exploring some strange far-off land ; for where all before you is unknown, all things appear possible. An inviting road it was, that seemed to beckon us on and on with the promise of some fresh treat at every turn ; it never wholly belied its promise, yet never quite satisfied our anticipations ; it ever kept us in a delicious state of expectancy. How bewitchingly beautiful the sweet landscape looked that day, bathed in the soft golden light of the summer sunshine ! If there is a fairer country than England, it has yet to be discovered.

At one spot we came upon a forlorn-looking hostel that had evidently seen better days. Probably, when it was more prosperous, it was less picturesque. From a large bay window in this, a great old lamp projected in a curious manner, doubtless serving of old to show benighted travellers the whereabouts of the inn, and possibly as well to throw a light upon the 'coach change.'

Then, as we drove along in a delicious day-dream, we came upon an old windmill, long since past all work, looking sadly deserted and desolate on its lonely height, its two remaining great black sails bent and broken, standing gauntly out like two giant's arms against the bright silvery sky. There was something almost pathetic about that battered and useless windmill, its days of labour over, left thus to slow but sure decay. There it stood, solitary and forsaken, still bravely facing all the

storms and winds of heaven, the hands who raised it dead and gone, and perhaps their very names forgotten.

Amongst the many old-world structures that we passed, one especially delighted us—an exceedingly picturesque farmstead with a little colony of irregular roofed timber and brick outbuildings. Amongst these we noticed some quaint oast-houses that are such a characteristic and familiar feature in hop-growing Kent, but uncommon in this part of England. A large duck-pond in the farmyard doubled the ancient building on its stilly surface. Around were great wide-spreading elms, amongst which the rooks were holding a noisy argument ; but, not understanding their language, we could not make out what it was all about ; manifestly, however, some important matter was under discussion. What a charm a rookery gives to a country home ! Inharmonious and noisy though the clamouring of rooks may be when analysed, I have never yet come across a single person who objects to it, or indeed to whom it fails to give pleasure. Do rooks really ‘caw, caw, caw,’ as is generally accepted ? After listening long and attentively to their utterances, it seems to me that the sounds they give forth are more nearly rendered by ‘queer, queer, qw-oar,’ the last utterance being the most prolonged and distinct.

The next village on our road was Little Waltham, a charming hamlet situated in a wooded valley, and by the side of a small fishful-looking river just large enough to merit that title ; this stream we crossed by an ancient bridge. We

observed some picturesque half-timbered cottages here that give a pleasing individuality to the place. The clustering village homes, both great and small, are happily and effectually grouped, the outcome of accident, but none the less delightful for that ; an artist could scarcely of set purpose have grouped them better—if as well. The light and shade too, caused by the irregular building of the cottages, added greatly to the picture. A square house ‘with no nonsense about it,’ and no homelike beauty either for that matter, no suggestiveness of cosy rooms in odd corners—an uncompromising square house, standing either singly by itself or in a terrace, how flat and uninteresting it seems for want of the changeful play of light and shade, varying each hour as the sun goes round ! So well did the builders of old understand and strive for the picturesque relief caused by light and shade, that often you will find in their houses the carvings upon the north side, where there is less sun, to be bolder and deeper cut than on the others ; partially for this purpose also they sought for irregularity, and were careful to avoid studied uniformity.

A few more miles, without much of particular interest on the way, brought us to the cheerful-looking village of Broomfield, which is built around a pleasant green. This village playground was in the possession of a happy, laughing group of children, whose sun-tanned faces contrast so with the pale visages of the little ones in the London alleys and slums, with only the roadway and thronged pavement for their sports. How much better the working-

man's family are off in the country, with a village green to romp upon, or perhaps even the more extensive common to run and chase each other over, with sometimes fields to wander about, and blackberrying, nutting, and birdsnesting all in their season! Even the poorest cotter's child in the country has the benefit of breathing the fresh air that, at any rate, belongs to rich and needy alike.

The quaint old church here stands at one end of the green. Its massive flint tower is round; it was like coming unexpectedly upon an old friend to see a round tower again (such a familiar feature to us in the Norfolk landscape). This is manifestly of great antiquity, and we were surprised to find one of so uncommon a form in these parts. The body of the church appeared completely restored, but, with the exception of an added steeple, the tower has apparently suffered but little change.

The churchyard here has a cared-for look that pleased us much; ornamental trees are planted in it; the tombstones are not given wholly over to decay; the gravel walks are well kept. 'If not 'so beautiful as to make one in love with death,' at least it has not that melancholy, depressing appearance that many country churchyards have, with their rank grass, moss-grown tombstones, and neglected, weedy paths, often these leading right over some memorial slab, the inscription effaced, the very stone worn concave by the tread of the heedless living.

The village 'public' at Broomfield bears the grand title of the 'Royal Arms'—the first time, as

far as our recollection serves, that we have noticed this sign.

The country still continued to charm us by its quiet pastoral beauty, but the road became dusty, and the freshening wind blew the dust about, so that we did not enjoy that portion of our drive as much as we otherwise should. Strangely enough, considering that England has the reputation of being a rainy country, we have found, during our many driving tours over almost every portion of it, dust rather than wet to be the greatest drawback to our pleasure. This indeed, I think I may safely say, was the one 'fly in our ointment.' You may shelter from a sudden shower under some spreading trees, but dust you cannot avoid.

Driving on, we arrived at the decayed market town of Writtle, an exceedingly picturesque little place, almost indeed justifying the term quaint, consisting as it does of many curious and charming old houses, bordering an extensive green, which green is enlivened by a large sheet of water. The church here is a large edifice, much restored—a mixture, muddle rather should I say, of various architectural styles unhappily combined. The builders of old, when they repaired a fane or enlarged one, were careful to harmonise the new with the ancient; they added a chapter to its history in stone rather than took away from it. The spirit in which they worked is gone. Even when we do condescend to restore a building on the old lines, we lamentably fail for want of the skilled mediæval craftsman; we are mechanical copyists merely, and

‘no process of copying can produce artistic results, unless the animating creative faculty impress the work with the personality of the artist.’

The tower of the church is a massive nondescript structure, massive without being grand, great without being impressive. It was rebuilt in the year of grace—I cannot add taste—1802, as a bold inscription upon it declares. The modern restorer need not have been so careful to assert the authorship of his production; even without this inscription, I should never have given the ancient builders credit for such a tasteless piling up of stones. The church is better viewed from a distance; a nearer inspection of it is not inspiring; it is, however, serviceable as a foil to enhance the simple picturesqueness of the charming old half-timber and plaster cottages that cluster around it—cottages that have retained their ancient picturesqueness unchanged, in spite of the changeable times.

Writtle possesses a genuine old-world flavour. As we wandered about the sleepy little place, making a sketch of a quaint gable here and a quaint chimney or curious bit of architecture there, it was difficult to realise that really we were in this practical and pushing age, so did the primitive peacefulness of the unprogressive place impress us. It seemed almost as though by some strange magic we had awakened from a long slumber, a sort of reversed Rip van Winkle’s sleep, and found ourselves with the hand of Time turned back two centuries. The country round about Writtle contains some very interesting old houses. Near to the town may be seen a piece of



land, of an acre or more in extent, surrounded by a moat. Here, tradition has it, King John built himself a palace in the year 1211. But whether the tradition rests upon any foundation of fact, I know not.

We now entered upon a long level stretch of country—by level I mean that such was the general impression it gave us, not that it was absolutely or relatively ‘as flat as a billiard-table,’ as some one somewhere has wrongfully termed Essex ; though I am sure as to the correctness of the quotation, who made it, and where, I cannot at the moment recall. I wish that the people who write so glibly about English scenery would sometimes take the trouble to see it first. Compared with Derbyshire or Yorkshire, Essex is tolerably level ; compared with Cambridgeshire or Lincolnshire, it might even be considered hilly, taken as a whole. Three-fourths, by rough guess-work, of our road through Essex, both coming and going, was either undulating or positively hilly. So much for preconceived notions !

If the country we passed through for the time was a level one, it was none the less pleasant for that. The sunny landscape that lay stretched out on either side of us, with its scattered villages, frequent prosperous-looking farmsteads, and pretty cottages, gave us the feeling of homely repose. Placid cows were contentedly feeding knee-deep in the rich green grass, or lazily chewing the cud under the shelter of great branching elms, switching away the flies meanwhile with their long tails. Now we passed a meadow golden with buttercups—an English gold-field this!—now a rustic stile with a

footpath beyond, following the course of a winding stream, almost tempted us to stop awhile and explore it ; now a blue film of uprising smoke would reveal where an old home was hidden behind ancestral trees ; now a spire would attract the eye to the red roofs of a distant village ; now we would pass over a gently gliding brook whose meanderings we could trace afar by the silvery green of the pollard poplars that bordered its banks ; now we would pass by some haymakers busy in the fields. There was plenty to engage our attention on the way ; a flat country has its own peculiar beauties, charms, and interest. Holland is flat enough, yet it is an eminently picturesque country ; rural Essex is also picturesque.

Presently, as we drove along, we became aware of a most singular atmospheric effect. Stretching all across the long line of the horizon in front of us was a low white mist ; the sun shining brightly upon this made it look for all the world like a vast mass of cotton wool. The fog gradually rolled on towards us, blotting out the landscape as it progressed ; soon we were enveloped completely in it ; our horizon was suddenly limited to a few yards in distance. The atmosphere grew cold and damp, and we were glad to don our overcoats for warmth. Only half an hour before we had been complaining of the heat. The fog was not altogether pleasant ; however, we tried to console ourselves with picturing the worse discomforts that probably Londoners were undergoing. Though damp, the fog here was undiluted ; it was neither black nor smut- and sulphur-laden.

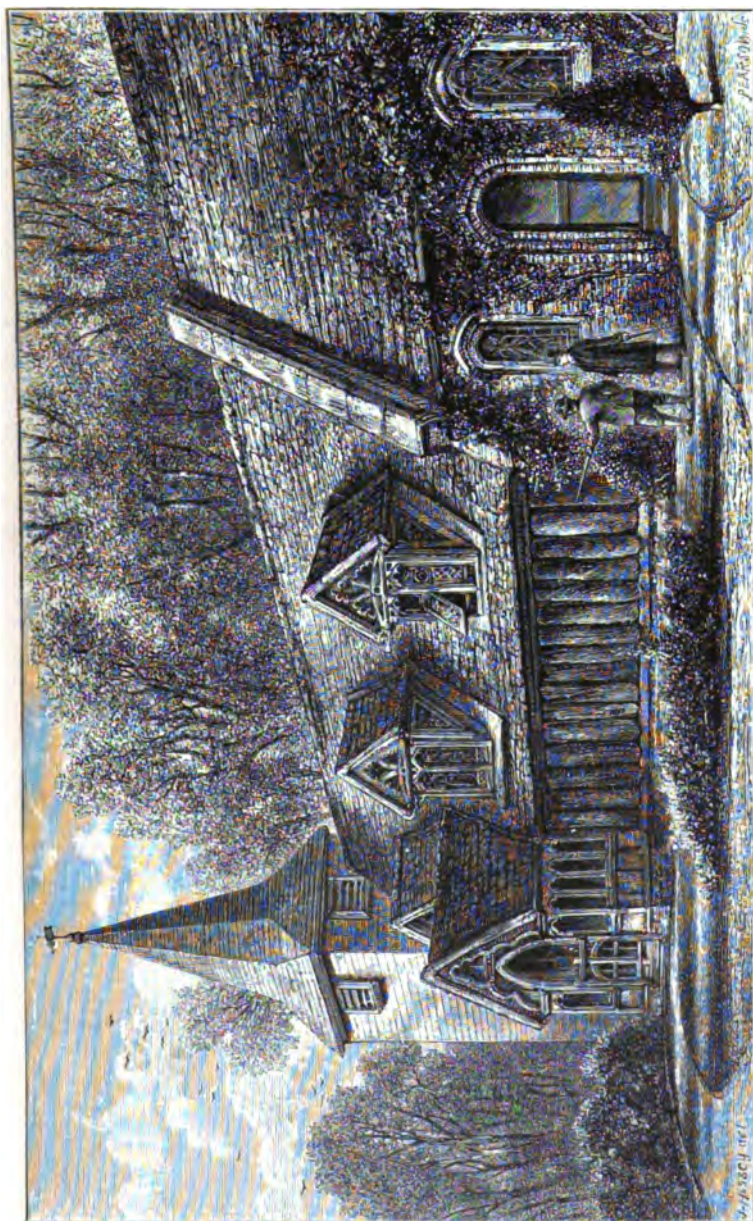
It is strange how objects appear magnified when seen through mist ; the spectral trees on either side of the way appeared quite gigantic. One ancient windmill we passed assumed Titanic proportions, and almost startled us by the sudden manner in which it loomed high above the phaeton from out of the mist. It was as though we were travelling through a land of giants ! We began in time even to enjoy the mysterious effects of the mist, though it was puzzling driving along an unknown road when one could scarcely see a yard in front of one's horses' heads. The horn was brought into frequent requisition, to prevent any chance of a collision, for country people are careless in their driving. Once, indeed, we had (in spite of the warning horn) to pull up suddenly, for straight in front of us (on the wrong side of his way of course) the dim outline of a farmer, jogging contentedly along, came into view ; he, however, took things very philosophically in spite of the fact that by going as he did he nearly caused an accident. ' Bless my soul ! ' he merely ejaculated, then whipped his horse to the other side of the way and was lost to sight. Possibly the worthy farmer on his previous drives had seldom met anyone on the road, and he did not expect to meet with another traveller on such a foggy day. We had to trust to luck to keep on the right track, for no landmarks were visible, and our maps were useless.

Suddenly the fog lightened, a gleam of misty sunshine became apparent, weak at first but gradually growing stronger, till at last we found ourselves

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once more in a bright, warm, clear world. Looking back it was interesting to behold the long line of dense white mist being dispersed by the sun. But our British fogs, say what we will of them and disagreeable though they be, cannot 'hold a candle' to those that honour the Banks of Newfoundland with their presence and are the dread of the mariner. When crossing the Atlantic I have steamed right into one of these American fogs, and after that sample I always feel inclined to apologise for the poorness of the home production to any of our cousins from across 'the ferry' who may chance to be in England during the fog season.

Soon now we came to the ancient one-streeted town of Chipping Ongar, a straggling, uninteresting place; the country around is, however, rather pretty. But Chipping Ongar, even were it ten times more uninteresting than it is, would be worth going far to visit just to see the unique and ancient wooden church of Greenstead, to be reached by a pleasant stroll of about a mile across the green fields, though so delightful is the walk it scarcely seems half that distance. I wonder how many travelled Englishmen there are who have even as much as heard of this exceedingly interesting old Saxon fane, built of the trunks of trees, the only remaining Saxon wooden church in England, and stated to be one of the most ancient in the world. Were this remarkable structure only hidden somewhere in a remote district of the Continent and difficult of access, possibly there would be but few Englishmen who would not visit it, or at least know all about it. How many of my readers, I wonder,



GREENSTEAD CHURCH, ESSEX



are aware of the existence of this ancient church ? Yet it is well within twenty-five miles of London, readily reached by road or rail. A spare afternoon, or, better still, a whole day, might be very pleasantly and profitably spent by taking a pilgrimage to this unique and picturesque church, over eight eventful centuries old. Though repaired from time to time, there is every reason to believe that this is the very original structure erected as a temporary resting-place, or shrine, for the body of St. Edmund, King of the East Angles, which body was deposited here on its translation from London to Bury St. Edmunds, in the year 1013, if antiquaries are correct in their date.

Once you have the footpath pointed out to you at Ongar, you cannot go astray ; this leads you direct across pleasant meadows to Greenstead. I may, perhaps, here just mention that there is another Greenstead near Colchester. Not being aware, at the time, of the fact, when telling a friend of this church we merely said that we had come upon it in Essex, and he, anxious to see it after hearing our description, took a long journey to the wrong place. The names of places being thus exactly the same often causes annoying mistakes, especially when they are situated in the same county. There is a pretty little village at the foot of the South Downs in Sussex called Berwick, and I am told that letters and parcels intended for that village often go astray to the more famous Berwick on the Tweed ; in the same way, sometimes, letters and telegrams addressed to the Post Office at Charing (a little country town in Kent), are delivered at the Post

Office at Charing Cross, in the big city on the banks of the Thames, and once I heard of a letter addressed to Boston, and intended for that town in Lincolnshire, getting amongst the American mails and going all the long journey over the Atlantic to Boston in the United States ; eventually, however, this letter found its way back to its rightful destination in England.

However, to return to ourselves. A quarter of an hour's stroll across the fields in question brought us in sight of Greenstead church, its wooden spire peeping out of surrounding foliage just as the foot-path came to an end. Wandering into the church-yard, we found, as we feared, that the door was locked, so we glanced around to see if there were anyone about who could direct us to where the clerk lived, but there was not a soul in sight—somehow there never is in the country when you want to ask your way anywhere. It would be a great convenience for tourists if the name of the clerk and his residence were marked in the church porch. We observed that this was done in one place, and the fact saved us considerable trouble. Of all forms of hunting, clerk-hunting is the least enjoyable. Like the proverbial policeman, the clerk is seldom to be found when wanted, and, strangely enough, our experience has been that the more interesting the church the more difficult is it to obtain the keys.

There was nothing to be done but to wander along the lane, trusting to luck that we were going in the right direction. As good fortune had it, we did after a while meet a countryman tramping along, when the following edifying conversation took place :



‘Do you know where the clerk of the church lives?’

‘Ess, I do; leastways I ought to, having lived about these parts man and boy . . .’ and so on, for ever so long, which was tedious, and not to the point.

‘Would you kindly show us the way to the house in which he lives?’

‘You’re going straight away from it; you see you oughter have gone the other way.’

This was provoking, and not much more satisfactory. It is almost as difficult to get a direct answer to a simple question from a countryman as it is from a lawyer.

‘Then could you kindly tell us which way we should go to get to the clerk’s house from here?’

‘Well, ’taint exactly easy to tell; you’ve got to go down one road and up another, and maybe you wouldn’t know the cottage when you saw it. It’s out of my way, you see, but I’ll tell you what I’ll do: I doan’t mind agoing a bit out of my road to show you for a sixpence.’ This was business-like and a good deal to the point, and we concluded, to save time, that we would pay the ‘fee.’ Our guide included more for the ‘fee’ than we bargained for; as he trudged slowly along he would relate to us a long-winded and intensely uninteresting history all about himself and his ‘fayther who lived in these parts afore I, and brought up a family of eight children, and eddicated ’em all, and he were only a farm hand.’ We were not sorry when we came to the clerk’s cottage and got rid of our guide, who suggested

that, if we would give him a threepence 'extr'y,' he would drink our very good healths. I am sorry to say that we were weak enough to give the 'extr'y' threepence.

Knocking at the cottage door, to our dismay we learnt that the clerk had just gone out. 'I'm not quite sure where he is gone to,' said his good wife—at least we presumed the woman to be such—'but I think it most likely that you'll find him at the church. He has not been gone five minutes.' This was provoking, but we had become accustomed to this sort of thing; there was manifestly nothing for it but to tramp back to the church, which we did accordingly.

Fortunately, we eventually ran the clerk to ground in the churchyard, and a very civil, intelligent clerk he proved to be. He even expressed his regret at the trouble we had had in finding him; doubtless he also had his fee in view and had learnt that as a rule civility adds thereto. To our remarks as to the general difficulty we experienced when travelling across country in finding the clerks of the various churches we wished to inspect, he pertinently replied that it was not always possible for him to be at home, or to be aware when strangers might be coming to see the church. So much for the clerk's point of view, and after all there is a good deal in it. A clerk, as he said, might wait at home a whole day long and nobody come for him; and, besides, he had other duties to perform than acting as showman to a church. Truly, but if country rectors could only see their way to allowing their churches to be left open during week-

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**days**, much trouble and time would be saved to **tourists** desiring to see them ; but, again, this arrangement would hardly suit the clerk's views, who would **certainly** lose considerably in fees thereby, all of **which** goes to prove how impossible it is in this imperfect world to arrange matters to please everybody.

## CHAPTER XXI.

The Oldest Church in England—Across Country—English Scenery  
—Through Epping Forest—Drivers Asleep—Chingford—The  
Royal Forest Hotel—Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge—Upstairs  
on Horseback—The Genus Tripper—To-day and the Long Ago—  
Home Again—Pleasant Memories of the Past.

HAVING at last got hold of the clerk, the next thing to do was to inspect the curious church. This is not a large structure, the nave being, by rough step measurement, only about thirty feet long and fourteen feet wide. The walls are composed of great trunks of trees split asunder and roughly hewn to an approximately smooth surface on the inside; these trunks are set upright close together, as shown in the illustration, which is a faithful representation of the building. The better to preserve these ancient timbers (that originally had their ends fixed in the ground and had become rotten in the damp earth), a foundation of bricks has been made to receive them, and, in spite of the weight of centuries that is upon them, the olden walls seem strong still and apparently well able to outlive centuries to come. The tops of the timbers are fixed into a wall-plate by wooden pegs, and thus sustain the roof.

The first thing that struck us upon entering this ancient fane was the warm, comfortable appearance that the walls of wood give to it, in such marked

contrast with the chilly look of the bare stone that mostly prevails in country churches. The walls are not high, measuring only about six feet from the base to the eaves of the roof.

Another peculiar feature about this church that we remarked is the fact that there are no windows, as is usual, in the walls at the side, the nave being lighted by dormer windows in the roof above; the effect of this is a softened gloom that is very pleasing and restful to the eye. In the church we were shown a fragment of ancient stained glass, with the crowned head of St. Edmund upon it, also a bit of mediæval carved wood, representing the tradition of the wolf watching the king's head.

So old and black are the timbers of the walls that the clerk told us there had been many disputes amongst authorities upon such matters as to whether these were of oak or of chestnut, but though the matter was still in dispute, the generally received opinion was that they are of oak. There are some monuments in the church, but none of special interest. Taking us outside, the clerk pointed out the spot where at one time the entrance had been—just opposite to where it is now. This former doorway had been filled up in past days with half trunks of trees to match the others, and he supported the fact that the entrance had once been there by showing us a holy-water stoup hollowed out of one of the ancient timbers. Wonderfully interesting is this ancient wooden church, taking us back to the morning of English history, possibly the most interesting, certainly the most ancient, in Great Britain. If walls

have histories, surely these rude timber ones have their own story to tell? It was with great reluctance that we left this one remaining timber church of our Saxon forefathers and retraced our steps to the unromantic town of Chipping Ongar.

Mounting the phaeton once again, we proceeded on our way to Epping, our intended destination for the night. We drove along for a time in silence, for we felt sorrowful that our most enjoyable wanderings were coming to an end, as all good things do in this world, and all evil ones too for that matter. To-night we shall rest at the little forest town of Epping; to-morrow evening will see us once more in smoky, prosaic London. The last day of a driving tour is always to me a sad one; the long, tedious journey through the wilderness and mazes of London suburban streets is not very inspiring, and when you have to traverse the mean, dreary outskirts of the East End, the coming home is more depressing still. London has grown so huge—resembling more a province of houses than a city—that it takes a long while either to drive out of it into the real country, or to get back into it again after the last genuine green fields have been left behind. In the outward journey you have the knowledge that when you have escaped from the miles and miles of houses you will reach beauty at last; going back again no such knowledge cheers you.

There was, we judged from a glance at our map, an excellent high road from Ongar to Epping, but it appeared to us also that we could make the stage by cross-country lanes, and as we concluded that

these would be infinitely more agreeable than the dusty highway, we decided to go by them ; nor did we regret our choice of route. Truly the lanes were narrow, winding, and in parts hilly and heavy going, but, on the other hand, they led us through a very pretty rural country. The way certainly was difficult to find, as one lane led into another in a most confusing manner, and some led nowhere save to fields and lonely farmsteads, but what mattered this ? Our time was our own, we were accountable to no one for it, if it pleased us—as it did—to loiter ; wherefore should we hurry ? and if once or twice (in spite of all our care) we managed to get off our right road, did we not gain very pretty unexpected peeps by our unintended explorations ?

The country we passed through was very English-looking : a country composed of meadows and tilled fields, with tangled hedges between, dotted ever and again with rambling farmsteads, built long before this century began, with here and there a lowly cottage, and now and then a stray windmill (just to give the landscape a character), and last, but not least, with distant peeps of many a grey-towered rural fane. The cottages, I must confess, were the only objects in the landscape that did not afford us unqualified pleasure : they were lowly, but scarcely deserved the term picturesque—a term I should like much better to employ could I do so faithfully, and I maintain that it is the bounden duty of a traveller, whether at home or abroad, to record facts, not fiction.

Scenery strikes observers differently. Dr. John-

son (as before remarked) called the English country 'only a collection of green fields.' A recent American writer has expressed the same view in another way: he calls England 'an endless monotony of fields for the production of breadstuffs,' varied by 'moors for grouse shooting.' Truly some people have eyes to see, but do not observe. The ordinary town-dweller, long immured amidst bricks and mortar, has to become educated to understand the more subtle beauties of the every-day English landscape, for these are of the quiet, restful order and do not proclaim themselves at first sight, unless there be a striking feature in the view to compel attention to the less assertive charms around. But after all, scenery that impresses you at first seldom retains your admiration for long. It may astonish you, call from you wonderful adjectives at the time to express your sudden admiration, but astonishment is not love—and only love endures for ever. The Yosemite valley in California perfectly fascinated me when first I beheld its stupendous precipices and its glittering falls shattering their waters into spray from the mere height of their descent. As I beheld this wonderful valley from Inspiration Point, spread out beneath me in all its indescribable glory, with the silent company of snow-capped mountains beyond, their summits dazzlingly white in the cloudless sunshine, I thought that I could never tire of it. It seemed like some enchanted valley, some fairy fableland, hardly a reality. Yet in a week I was utterly weary of all its overpowering splendours. Its grandeur oppressed, no longer delighted me. I felt rejoiced, truly, to have



beheld so marvellous a scene, but for all was glad to get away to a less wonderful land. Well now do I remember at the time how I longed with a great longing for a glimpse of a bit of my own dearly loved English country, so rest-bestowing, friendly-looking, and companionable; not too beautiful or astonishing for every-day existence; not exciting, yet never depressing or dull—only lovable! It seems so near to one's heart, it is so winsome, so homelike; and therein lies the special charm of rural England—a charm that may be felt, but which is beyond the power of mere words adequately to convey.

There are certain people, however (let us hope that their number is few), upon whom even the most lovely scenery palls unless it has more or less human associations connected with it. Like Scott, they look on scenery as a mere background to these; unlike Wordsworth they cannot love the country for the sake of its own simple beauty. Such men there are, and one of the most famous of these was Dr. Johnson, who, as it will be remembered, when, during his Scotch tour, he was being shown a prospect of exceeding beauty, asked to have the inn pointed out to him! Of such peculiarly constituted persons it may truly be said that 'it is not the rock jutting over the sea that is admired in itself, but this only claims attention as a firm foundation for the ruined castle in which proud and chivalrous knights and fair ladies dwelt: not the field, with its waving ears of corn and its hedgerows with all the delicate colours and the world of graceful lines of the growth within it, belted by wood and dale, but the field upon which

Roundheads and Cavaliers fought for the Parliament or King Charles . . . and the atmosphere is bright, is clear or dismal, as it best suits the lonely horseman muffled in his cloak.' Truly human associations give the glamour of an added interest to even the fairest scene, but they do not make its beauty, and when these associations are absent the beauty is none the less.

At last we emerged from the winding, puzzling, pleasant lanes into the wide high-road, soon after which we found ourselves in the long one-streeted town of Epping, where we obtained comfortable quarters at the Cock Inn (if I remember the title aright). An old-fashioned hostelry is the Cock, homely as best pleased us, with a good-natured landlady to sum up its unostentatious attractions. We were agreeably surprised to come upon such a comfortable little hostelry here, for as a rule we have found the first stage out of London, and the last stage in, to be the worst provided with hotels. Travellers nowadays when within twenty miles or so of town generally prefer to take the rail to London and sleep there, so that there is but small encouragement for hotel-keepers near to town, though houses of entertainment of other kinds abound. We discovered from a chat with our landlady that the secret of the quiet prosperity of her inn was owing to the fact that people often come down here for a day or so, and sometimes not unfrequently for a week or more, to see and explore the forest, and now and again a stray artist finds his way to the homely hostel and makes it his headquarters for a while.

The inn still retains the old-time familiar feature of the ample courtyard behind, so that manifestly it was once a coaching house, and, possibly owing to the fact that it still owns a considerable and a profitable custom, it looks much to-day as it did before the iron horse had driven the one of flesh and blood from off the road ; it seems never to have been added to or taken from since the last coach changed horses there.

Leaving Epping we drove through the forest to Chingford, and a very pleasant drive it was through the wild woodlands, wild if not exactly 'forest primæval.' Of deer we saw none, so that we had to take their existence for granted. We did not have the road all to ourselves as we had been accustomed to almost the whole of our journey since we left Brentwood save when in the close neighbourhood of towns, for we met a number of empty carts (returning, we judged, from Covent Garden Market) ; most of the drivers of these were comfortably—or uncomfortably—ensconced in sacks, lying down in the bottom of their separate conveyances, fast asleep ! Possibly they had been awake since the early morning, and when they had threaded their way through the London streets and got into the straight forest road, had dropped off to sleep half unconsciously. Not being aware of this fact at the time, and seeing the first cart we met coming along apparently without any driver, he being effectually hidden at the bottom of the conveyance, we gave a loud blast upon the horn ; the result was to rouse the slumberer, who pulled his horse right on the grass, then, as

we approached him, he abused us for having awakened him, and coolly settled down to sleep again! The next cart we met also had no visible driver, but as the sward by the side of the way happened to be level, so that we could drive upon it in case of emergency, we determined to pull up and see what would happen. The horse came quietly along right in the middle of the road, the reins hanging loosely over his head; when, however, he approached us, without any guiding hand the intelligent animal went over to his right side of the way, leaving ample room for us. This course was exactly repeated by other horses whose drivers were indulging in a similar rest, apparently utterly oblivious of the outer world. Evidently they were used to this sort of thing, and after a time we got used to it too, and even took a delight in watching the sagacity of the hard-worked animals. After they had passed us we noticed that they resumed the centre of the road, and went on their way contentedly and we went on ours.

Presently we came to a cross-road, with a signpost at the corner having 'To the Royal Forest Hotel' inscribed thereon. Here we left the highway and soon found ourselves at Chingford, where we drove straight into the stable-yard of the hotel. A compact, business-like stable-yard this, quite a different thing from the picturesque and ample courtyards of the old coaching inns. The Royal Forest Hotel we found to be a large and not displeasing half-timbered structure; it would, perhaps, have been more in keeping with its surroundings had the building been a trifle less stately, but this is a small matter.

perhaps hardly generous to suggest, when the desire to build picturesquely is so evident.

A crowded excursion break, with four jaded-looking horses, was standing at the door, the excursionists singing loudly if not musically. We went within the hotel ; it was crowded, and so we came out again, determined to have a picnic in some quiet recess of the forest, for we always carried with us in the phaeton a spirit lamp, a small allowance of whisky, tea, and preserved provisions, as, when on the road, it is pleasant to be able to rest awhile at some tree-shaded spot and take an *al fresco* meal. Such wayside picnics are always delightful, and we indulged in them upon every excuse, the horses upon such occasions being allowed a few mouthfuls of fresh grass, much to their manifest enjoyment. And after a picnic thus in some quiet out-of-the-world nook, how delightful it is to lie down upon one of the rugs from the phaeton and smoke the pipe of peace, listening to the singing and chirping of the birds, or it may be to the gurgling of some silvery stream, watching the while through the interlacing branches of the trees overhead the careless, white summer clouds go drifting across the deep blue sky, whilst the softened sunshine filters to you through the multitude of lambent leaves, forming glinting patterns of glowing green and gold upon the green grass around your feet. Could there be anything more soothing or peace-bestowing ?

The Royal Forest Hotel is to the East-Londoner what the Star and Garter is to the West-ender. Of the two buildings the Forest Hotel, if not quite as

pretentious, is by far the more picturesque, but when we were there the noisy army of trippers, out for a day in the country, took a good deal of glamour away from the picturesqueness of the place. At any rate, Tom, Dick, and Harry, whatever their shortcomings, can hardly be said to 'take their pleasures sadly.' But what right have we to complain of them? Should we not rejoice that they elect to spend their rare holiday amidst the fresh green woods rather than in the stuffy public house? Truly we prefer to take our pleasures quietly, but *chacun à son goût*. We are not selfish enough to begrudge others their enjoyment, even though their ways are not our ways.

Close to the hotel at Chingford stands a quaint, half-timbered building known as Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, which that famous sovereign frequently visited when she went out in chase of the red deer, with her attendant maids dressed in white satin, in right regal style, for good Queen Bess was ever mindful of outward show, and dress was as dear to her heart as ever was the sport. A charming structure this, breathing of the past; once within its time-hallowed walls, the present almost appears a dream, so does the haunting genius of the spot take hold upon the imagination.

The near, afar off seems, the distant nigh :  
The now, a dream, the past reality.

An old writer, fully entering into the charms and sentiment of this old-world building, thus describes the impression that it made upon him : 'The hand of the past is impressed upon thee, and has given thee

a character. It has invested thee with poetry. Storms roaring through the huge elms that stand near—old companions of thine—fierce winters beating on thy steep, gabled roof, and tinting thy framed walls; autumns and springs, and hot basking summers, come across the imagination as we think of thee. The broad and easy oaken staircase, up which the heroine of the Armada and the Queen of Scots' tragedy is said to have ridden to her dining-room, the tapestried chamber, and the banqueting-hall, please me, but far more the ancient desolateness without and around.' When we were there, however, the desolateness was all within, not 'without and around.' Only one chamber in the house is now shown, the ancient banqueting-hall, situated right on top of the building; this is reached by a wide and ample oak staircase, which, according to tradition just mentioned, upon one occasion, Queen Elizabeth ascended on horseback. It is to my knowledge that a hunting man once did a similar mad freak for a bet, but having got his horse upstairs, nothing could induce that animal to make the descent, so that eventually it had to be stabled for the night in a bedroom, and was, with great difficulty, removed thence the next day!

The old banqueting-hall being placed right on the top of the building, a grand view of the forest is to be had from its many windows. The roof of this chamber is of open timber work, massive and substantial, and vastly more picturesque than the usual ceiling of flat plaster of the present day. We noticed, with interested curiosity, the quaint and

effective old-fashioned fastenings to the casement windows, a form of window so preferable to the heavy sash ones of to-day. Though possibly centuries old, a better fastener has yet to be invented: it is a thousand times more to the purpose than many a modern patent one—patented to sell. I speak from experience, having an exact copy of one of these in my house—result: the windows are no longer draughty nor do they rattle when the wind blows strongly as of yore; they never (the windows) hold fast, and can be easily opened or shut with one hand, when before sometimes these operations had to be performed by two, with more or less exertion. The design of the fastening also has the merit of being simple and artistically ornamental, besides effectual, a very happy and rare combination of good qualities. Any architect who may read this book will, I trust, for the benefit of his clients, take the intended hint, and not value it the less because I give it gratis.

If we had let our romantic imaginations have full play for a time whilst we were in that olden chamber, on our returning to the excursionist-haunted hotel our poetic dreams were effectually dispelled: we were all too quickly brought down to the stern reality of the nineteenth century. The hunting lodge was ancient, its antiquity was beyond reproach, the woods around were old and gnarled, even the half-timbered inn, with a fair allowance of fancy, might pass muster as aged too, thanks to its pleasant style of architecture; but the people around were unmistakably of to-day; we could by no possibility



idealise them, that was beyond our powers ; there were no gay or picturesque customs about, for when Harry takes his holiday he delights to 'sport' his best black coat, and tries to be what he considers 'the gentleman.' I do not blame him for that, but black is not a lively colour, and seems to me wholly out of place in the wild woods, however suitable in towns. The bit of bright colour that Harry indulges in is confined to his scarf, but this is too little to be effective, and the quality of the colour is not eye-pleasing, being generally of a crude green or a startling red. In wishing to be genteel (how I hate that much-abused word ! ) the modern tripper makes himself intensely unpicturesque. The genus tripper had not come into existence in the days when gentlemen dressed gaily—he is mainly the product of the railway. I wonder, if he had, what the tripper of the period would have been like. Colour is sadly wanting in the dress of the country folk of to-day. I heard of one worthy charitable person who made a Christmas present to all the poor old women in her parish of a red shawl ; the happy result was quite a brightening up of the little village where the women congregated, the shawls soon losing their first brightness and becoming agreeably toned down. An artist, painting in a remote hamlet in Wales, did something in a similar way, with an equally happy result.

The sudden contrast we experienced upon leaving the time-mellowed and peaceful interior of the olden hunting lodge and meeting with the nineteenth-century tripper, was, in truth, almost startling. There was to us a peculiar charm, a sentiment not

to be put into mere prosaic words, when in that ancient building, to tread the very stairs that good Queen Bess trod—how many long years ago?—to gaze through the windows she gazed through, to look upon the very tapestried walls that she looked upon. Possibly that mirror that now reflects our face also reflected the features of that august sovereign—if only those features could be given back in it to-day! If only those walls could speak, what might they not relate? Well, our descendants will be able to hear our voices by phonograph! There is something strangely eerie in the fact that the very words we have uttered may be repeated, in our very intonation, centuries after we have joined the great majority! I wonder whether in the long years to come, when science has discovered fresh marvels, the world will, for it all, be a happier place to live in. Possibly it may even be that our descendants will come to look back upon these as ‘the good old times’ (for the present will in turn become the past)—the romantic days of old when men made haste slowly by the picturesque railway! Who can tell what the glamour of age may not do? Perhaps even the twentieth-century poet will sing of the romantic railway, tuning his muse in a time when the iron horse will be as rare as a stage-coach is now? But enough of these profitless, wandering thoughts. Let us return to the Forest Hotel; the horses must long have finished their corn, so we will order them to be put to without delay and take our last stage home: and I feel that I cannot show you much of beauty on the way. Except that we do

not like to desert our good ship, the Phaeton, in which we have made many a delightful voyage—that we wish to steer her home safely into port after her long cruise; excepting for these most excellent reasons, we should feel almost tempted to take the speedy railway, and get through the wilderness of houses, with all their commonplace ugliness, as quickly as possible. On this exceptional occasion the railway seems altogether good.

And now, kind reader, our journey is nearing its end; we must, for a time, bid farewell to the pleasant green lanes and leafy woods of the mellow English country. A few more miles and we shall be in the prosaic and intensely uninteresting outskirts of Modern Babylon—noisy streets will take the place of the quiet rural roads, we shall not have to complain of deserted highways; no longer shall we be the only traveller in sight. First to make its appearance is the familiar omnibus, then the disagreeable tramway, then the London cab, and we soon are in the whirl of traffic. Now careful driving is needed through the thronged, bustling City, but soon the comparative quiet of the Thames Embankment is reached, then we pass some quaintly fantastic new Queen Anne houses of very red brick, facing the river at Chelsea, whose ambitious struggling after effect is but too apparent—very different these freaks in building from the unobtrusive harmony of the genuine old-time country homes that have delighted our eyes for so long—then Kensington, and, finally, home is reached. And after all, 'East, West, Home's best,' even though that home be in smoky

London. As we drive along, the horses, tired with their last long stage, hang back from their collars, but presently they observe some familiar landmark, for suddenly they trot briskly on once more, as though only just fresh from their stables ; now they want holding in rather than a reminder from the whip.

Sir Thomas Browne, I think it was, who stated that the best way of all to travel (though I cannot quite agree with him) was to journey by book, seated comfortably in an easy armchair. Still, if not the best way, it is one by no means to be despised. I can only trust, you, kind reader, who have accompanied us in this wise so far on our pleasant pilgrimage, may, from reading this simple, unvarnished account of our wanderings, have derived some small share of the great enjoyment that such wanderings gave to us. No words, least of all any words from my poor pen (I say pen, though the strictly correct term would be type-writer), can convey the delightful experiences and vivid impressions of our journey. But still I have done my best—and no man can do more than his best—to bring before you pictures, however imperfect, of what we saw. Pictures of ruined abbeys, grey with years, of ancient churches, with their curious brasses and quaint altar-tombs ; of moated manor houses, raised in a time when truly every man's house was his castle, rich in legends most of these ; of picturesque rambling farmsteads, cosy cottages, and last, but not least, of all these reminders of the days that are vanished, the many charming old-time coaching hostelries, that even in

this nineteenth century of steam-and-iron horses still, as erstwhile, open their hospitable doors to the traveller by road, and, what is much more to the point, make him exceedingly comfortable.

The English country, how happily it blends peaceful scenery with the associations of man ! How changeful, too, it is ! Every few miles reveals fresh beauties to the wanderer in it, and now and then fairly astonishes him by some wholly unexpected scenic surprise. Now the traveller passes through a restful, pastoral land ; now by way of contrast he traverses a lone, wild, wind-swept heath, so suggestive of the highwayman of old ; now his road takes him through waving, many-tinted woods, or for a while alongside a rippling, winding river, now through sleepy villages, now through quaint, irregular-roofed sunny towns, anon across a gorse-bestrewn common over which blows a bracing breeze ; now he gets a glimpse of the distant sea, and so the prospect ever varies as he journeys on. There is no country in the world that has such varied scenery in the same space as England.

Now, as I write this in the cheerless, sunless winter weather—I wish that I could add fogless—my vision in imagination wanders back to many a bright summer scene ; first one mind-picture rises before me, then another, pleasant memories of happy sunny days crowd fast upon me, memories that are a precious possession as long as my life shall last. Not the least delightful part of travel is the remembrance of the pleasant hours spent amidst the beauties of nature. And this fair land of Britain is

made doubly beautiful by the time-hallowed structures raised upon it by our long-departed forefathers—peace be to their ashes!—and by the mellowing influence wrought upon it by the ceaseless cultivation of centuries.

Now, as I close this record of our old-fashioned tour, my thoughts wander back ; in a delightful day-dream memories come to me

. . . . from all their far-flown nooks,  
Singly at first, and then by twos and threes,  
Then in a throng innumerable, as the rooks  
Thicken their twilight files  
Tow'rd Tintern's grave repose of roofless aisles.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## On the Road—Hints upon Driving Tours.

I HAVE often been asked, How did you manage about this and that when driving across country? What did the journey cost? Did your horses ever go lame? What did you take with you? What sort of accommodation did you find at the rural inns on the way? and so on. I think, therefore, that a few hints about roadwork and how we managed generally will possibly prove acceptable to those of my readers who may be induced to follow our excellent example and spend their summer holiday on the road, having all the pleasure of exploring a fresh country without leaving their own.

First of all, then, it is wise before starting to have your carriage and harness thoroughly overhauled. Nothing is more annoying than the necessity of being obliged to get your harness cobbled up by a rural workman, or your carriage wheels, say, oiled by the 'prentice village hand who, after doing this, may not recollect to replace the linch-pin, a fact that you will discover afterwards to your sorrow.

It has been stated by authorities on such matters that no horse can go day after day a distance of twenty miles without breaking down. I can only say

that this depends upon the horse and its treatment when on the journey, and very greatly on the driver, for of course you must to a certain extent consider and look to the welfare of your animals if your tour is to be successful. By walking them up the worst hills, and moderating your pace when the going is heavy, you save your horses wonderfully, for it is speed rather than distance that tells upon them, and who, when out on pleasure bent to see the country, would care to hurry? As for horses not being able to go day after day for a distance of twenty miles or so, I can only say that I took my useful little pair of cobs—useful, but nothing out of the ordinary way—to Scotland and back, going a round by the Lake District, and covering altogether about a thousand miles of ground, that we averaged twenty miles a day on the journey, and brought our horses home again, not only well and sound, but fresh enough to shy at the first London omnibus they met, and I even think better able to perform such a journey than when they started. Facts are more conclusive than statements. And it must be remembered that some portions of our way took us over a very ‘hard’ and trying country, some of the roads across the wild Yorkshire moors being stony, rough, and severe upon horses, the stabling, too, in many out-of-the-way places by no means all that could be desired, and as luck, or rather ill-luck, would have it, just where the roads and accommodation were the worst the weather was very stormy.

We always take a copy of ‘Paterson’s Roads’ with us, a truly wonderful work, published in the



heyday of the coaching age, and which we have always found of the greatest service ; for however the country may have changed since it was compiled, the roads remain the same, even frequently the very inns made mention of still exist under the same titles. In this most useful book, every highway in England is given, also nearly every cross road ; even the bridges are set down, and the chief objects of interest passed are duly noticed. The work is, unfortunately, becoming rare, but now and again copies may still, I believe, be picked up at second-hand bookshops. We always take with us Smith & Sons' shilling ' Reduced Ordnance Maps ; ' these are very clear and correct, though some of the minor country by-ways are not marked thereon. The maps are mounted upon linen, so that they are not liable to be torn into shreds if opened in the wind, as those of paper ; moreover they fold conveniently for the pocket.

It is well before starting on a driving tour to get, say, five pounds' worth of small silver in a bag from the bank ; the possession of this convenient change often saves giving a shilling where a sixpence would suffice, and so on. We keep our spare silver with sundry other articles, such as sketch-books, spirit-lamp, maps, books for a wet day (which on this journey we never opened), spare brake blocks, and candles for lamps, in the driving-box, which is provided with a good lock.


A brake is really needful ; it not only wonderfully saves the horses going downhill, but may prevent an accident : it should be remembered that it takes nearly as much force to keep a carriage back running

downhill as to start it, and therefore without a brake there is a perfectly needless waste of horse-power. Our brakes are patent rubber ones, far superior in every respect to those of leather and more lasting, which is a consideration ; in wet weather, too, the rubber has a far better bite upon the wheels, and more holding power—rubber brakes have every virtue but cheapness.

It is well to take candles for the lamps with you (not forgetting matches), in case of being belated, not so much to help to see the way, for the light is useless in this respect, but to prevent being run into, for we have found that country people on unfrequented rural roads have a bad habit of not keeping to their side of the way.

The continual change of stabling is not so trying to a horse as the frequent change of the water he has to drink. This is the worst evil to contend with on the road, and we always insist upon having our water 'with the chill off,' for sometimes, when just taken from a deep well, it is, even in the summer, icy cold ; also we take the precaution to put a handful of oatmeal in the water.

If you can always have loose boxes for your horses, nothing rests them more than the ability to roll about in freedom on a good bed of straw after a long day's journey ; even if you have to pay extra for such a luxury, it is money wisely expended, though, as a matter of fact, we were never charged anything additional for these. Ostlers are always anxious to please ; their expected tip depends upon their pleasing. We have always found them most



willing to do anything in their power for us. Change your horses' food now and again ; one day give them their oats with chaff, another with oatmeal (if this is slightly damped they will enjoy it the more), another time mix a few beans with their oats ; if in some country places the corn is light, give an extra feed between them. We always carry a few beans with us, in case the corn should not be good at the remote wayside inns, and replenish our small stock from time to time when passing through a town. There is no harm in enquiring of your landlord as to the inns ahead on your road ; you may also learn the ostler's views on the matter, but on arriving at a country town it is as well to drive round the place and prospect all the inns for yourself and choose the one that best pleases you, and appears to possess the best stabling.

We pack our personal belongings in tin uniform cases, to be had from almost any military outfitter ; these cases have the combined advantages of being light, strong, dust-tight, waterproof, and reasonable in price. A horn may be considered a needless article, to be taken more for the sporting look of the thing than for any real service. However, it is a matter of individual preference. We always carry a horn for *use* ; it sometimes saves a deal of shouting (and personally I strongly dislike to have to bawl out at the top of my voice). Moreover, a horn can be heard a long way off ; it at once attracts attention, far more so than any mere shouting will do—shout you ever so loudly—and when overtaking one of those hideous road monsters, the terror of the timid

traveller, a traction engine to wit, the sharp twang of the horn will make itself heard at a distance, when the noise of the steam puffing would effectually drown a simple shout from the driver ; also we have found it supremely useful to wake up sleepy wagoners, who are so accustomed to be shouted at that they will contentedly slumber on, even though you halloo at the top of your voice ; but especially useful is the horn to unearth the gateman at level crossings where there is not much traffic, who sometimes is anywhere but at his post. Yes, the horn is really very useful on the road—if you can sound it.

SHOWN IN RED.



40

80 ENGLISH MILES.

Stanford's Geogr. Estab.



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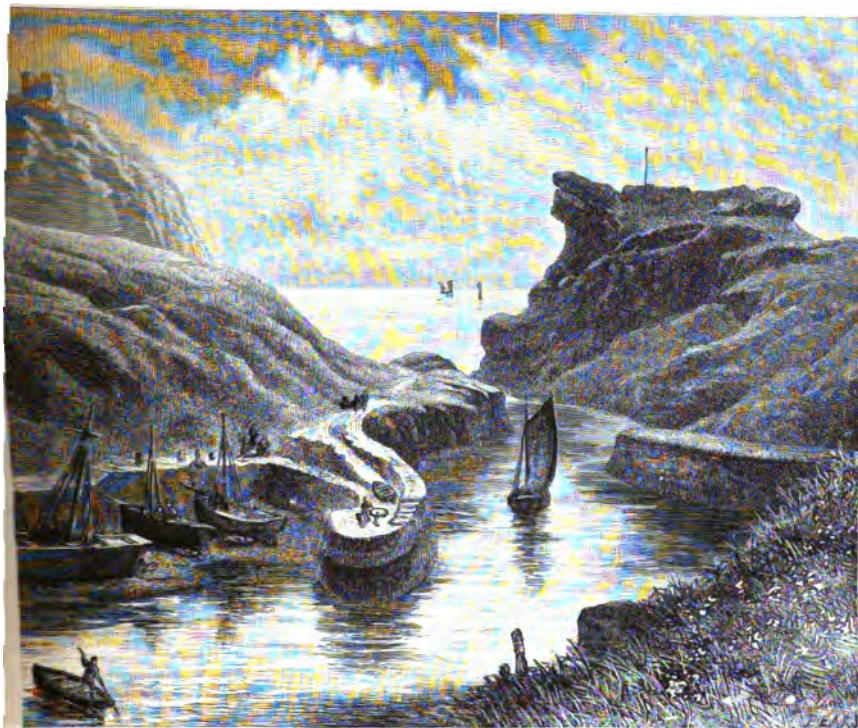
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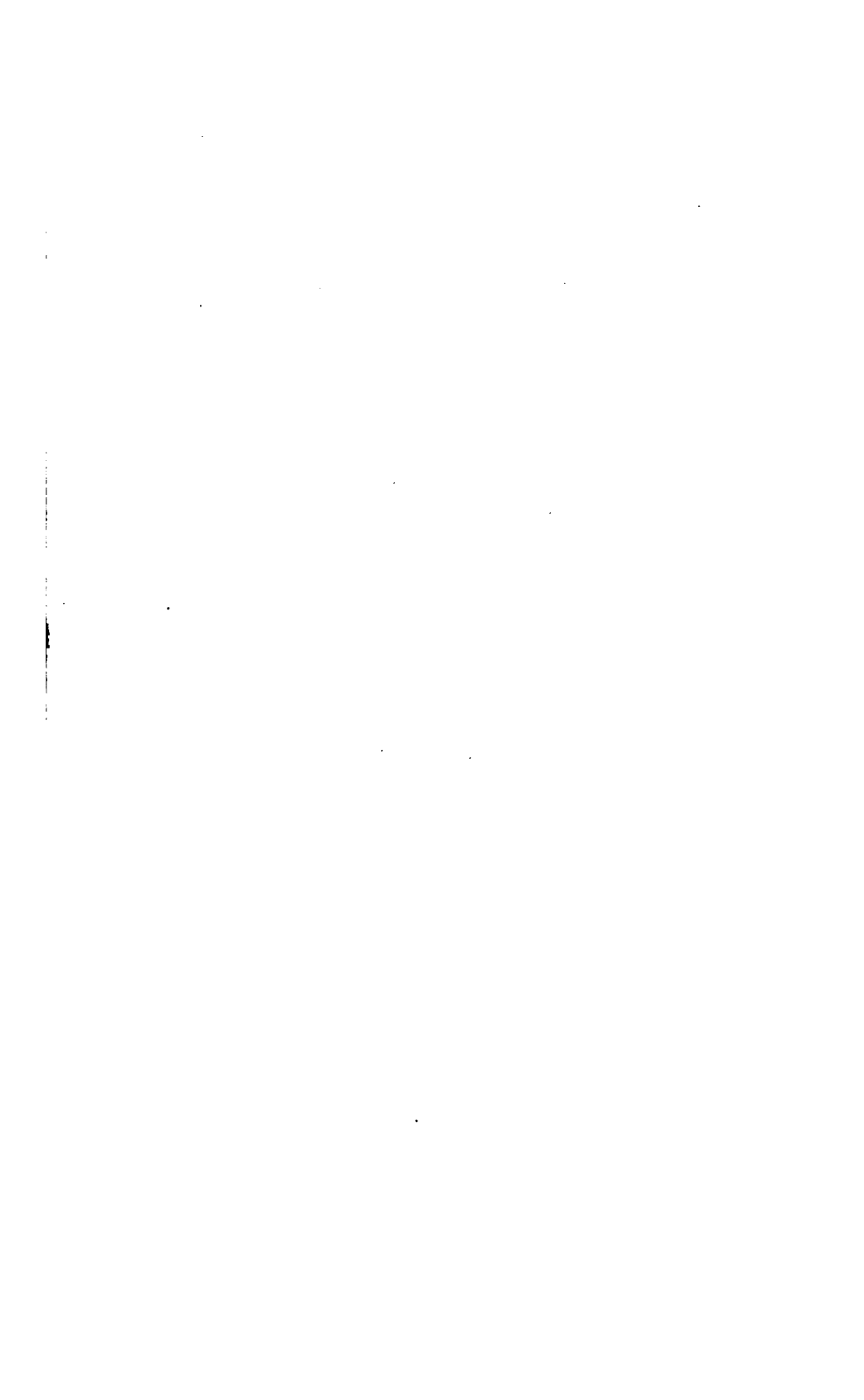
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